

PAUL ERNST AND SCHILLER

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A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the
University of Michigan

June, 1938

EDWARDS BROTHERS, INC.

ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN

1938

*48752



PRINTED IN U.S.A.

*Lithoprinted by Edwards Brothers, Inc., Lithoprinters and Publishers
Ann Arbor, Michigan, 1938*

Dedicated to
the Memory of a Schiller Seminar
Inspiringly Conducted
by Dr. F. B. Wahr
During 1930/31



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MOTTO

O lasz mich unberühmt und ungehaszt und frei
In den bestimmten Bahnen wandeln!

Stefan George

INTRODUCTION

A General Estimate of Paul Ernst.

Paul Ernst is a comparatively new name in the history of German literature, although he was born in 1866, started writing in the early nineties of the past century, and did his most characteristic work before the War. Only in a very few publications prior to his death in 1933, does he receive more than casual mention. As a typical reformer, he opposed many ideas current in his day and paid for this privilege by remaining comparatively unknown and unappreciated while he lived. Thus he could write:

Ich habe mein Herz auf den Händen
getragen, lange Jahre. Ich wollte es den
Menschen schenken; Niemand hat es gesehen,
dass ich es auf den Händen trug. Nun weisz
ich nicht mehr, ich alternder Mann: trage
ich es noch auf den Händen? Zuweilen
scheint es mir fast so.¹

Today there are increasingly important indications that a few appreciated his labors, nevertheless, and that his determined efforts to bring about a spiritual and moral rebirth of his people have not gone unheeded after all. There are even signs which make it appear probable that posterity will reward his memory with a generosity quite in proportion to the disinclination on the part of his own generation to listen to his calls for thorough-going reforms in social conditions and an about-face

¹Erdachte Gespräche (hereafter abbreviated: E.G.), p. 265.

in literary trends. The first of these signs appeared just in time to be perceived by Paul Ernst before he died. On his last birthday he was decorated with the Goethe Medal, and a few weeks before his death he was called into the newly reorganized "Dichterakademie."

Since then his fame has risen steadily, and just now societies devoted to efforts in his behalf are being formed all over Germany. As late as 1925 Soergel had complained, "Paul Ernst ... ist noch heute unbekannt oder verkannt," but asked: "Wann haben wir seit Lessing einen Dichter gehabt, der wie Paul Ernst schöpferische Kritik übt ...?"² In the same year Mahrholz had sensed what was coming when he wrote, "Wenn nicht alle Zeichen trügen, beginnt Paul Ernsts Werk allmählich in der Jugend zu wirken."³ Today it is no longer cause for great surprise to see Paul Ernst's name mentioned in one breath with Lessing's. Walter Linden has written of him: "Diese klare Weltvernunft liegt in jener Linie eines Lessing und Schiller, die ebensosehr, ja mehr noch als die irrationelle Mystik zum Wesenkern des Deutschtums gehört."⁴ In fact, there would probably now be almost general agreement with Hans Naumann who has since recognized in Paul Ernst's work "... tatsächlich die Vorwegnahme der grossen Wendung zum Wiederaufbau."⁵

As such appreciations multiply, there is bound to come with them increasing astonishment at the volume as well as the compass of his work, not to mention its superb quality. The collected works alone comprise 19 volumes. Ten of these contain novels and short stories, six others, theoretical essays, and the final three, dramas. Yet this is not all.

²A. Soergel: Dichtung und Dichter der Zeit, Leipzig, 1925, pp. 133 and 138.

³W. Mahrholz: Deutsche Dichtung der Gegenwart, Berlin, 1931, p. 204.

⁴W. Linden, "Paul Ernst: das Weltbild des Denkers," Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde, I, p. 159.

⁵Quoted from Die Neue Literatur, xxxv, no. 5 (Mai 1934), p. 285.

Without counting a number of smaller books, several pamphlets, many articles which are scattered through the newspapers and magazines of the period from 1888 through 1933, and a volume of verse, there remain to be added to this collection six important volumes which have so far appeared separately. Among them are the three divisions of his Kaiserbuch, two sections of an uncompleted autobiography, and his Heiland. If these latter be classified, as well they might be, as epic works and added to the existing collection under such a heading, we would have a total of 25 volumes, fairly equally divided in such a way as to mark Paul Ernst as a novelist, an essayist and theorist, a dramatist, and an epic poet as well.

His astounding versatility does not, however, appear in its full proportions until one recognizes that his theoretical essays alone cover a wide variety of subjects. There are scholarly treatises on abstract philosophical speculations, such as one on the nature of the deity; and there are scathingly phrased presentations of the political questions of the day.⁶ Aside from such extremes, the bulk of his theoretical writings can, however, be divided into two large groups. One of these, still covering a wide range, deals with sociological problems of one sort or another and reflects the fruition of the author's early training as a professional economist. The other group, resulting from his later convictions that he was born to be a poet, deals with literary criticism and closely related problems in ethics. In either of these large general fields Paul Ernst, moreover, betokens a " ... Schärfe des Verstandes, Glut des Fühlens, Fülle des Wissens ... , um die ihn mancher Gelehrte beneiden könnte."⁷ No wonder, the Neue Deutsche Biographie, listing

⁶Cf., an essay, entitled "Gott," in Grundlagen der neuen Gesellschaft and a pamphlet, Geist, werde wach! Ein Aufruf zur Revolution, 1921.

⁷Soergel, loc. cit.

Paul Ernst as the last one of its "Grosze Deutsche," speaks of " ... jener erstaunlichen Fülle von Abhandlungen, deren Schätze noch darauf warten gehoben zu werden."⁸

Of course, Paul Ernst is never primarily a scholar. He is always and essentially a creative artist. As such, he is both more and less than a scholar. He is less than a scholar because his reasoning is not always faultless. He is more than a scholar because he never writes without a purpose. Paul Ernst is always a constructive thinker. During the latter part of his life his thought is, moreover, consistently constructive toward a single goal. For that reason his theoretical works, largely written since 1910, in which year he experienced the last major crisis in his life, are, nevertheless, a single unit in spite of all the variety of the subjects they cover. Each one of the many individual essays will be found upon analysis to contribute a thought or two toward the clarifying of the one great issue with which Paul Ernst wrestled so ceaselessly ever since he discovered his real mission. For that reason, too, his theoretical works, as a unit, fit very well indeed into the company of his poetic works to form together with them a grand total of literary productions which are as truly remarkable for their cumulative effect upon the reader as they are astounding in their amount and variety.

This cumulative effect is the greater if the works are read in chronological order, for then the reader becomes conscious not only of the mighty inner struggles by which the spiritual evolution of the author is marked, but also of the increasing singularity of purpose which this development brought about in him. For whatever else may be said about Paul Ernst's versatility, it is no more striking a characteristic of the man than the constancy and the force with which he made this versatility

⁸Propyläen-Verlag, Berlin, 1937, Vol. 5, p. 529. (Article on Paul Ernst by Hellmuth Langenbucher).

serve a single and abiding purpose, once he had fully determined what this should be.

In his earlier days he may have written many stories or essays or even dramas from no other motive than to indulge a whim of the moment or perhaps to entertain himself with the sheer joy of creative activity. During middle life, when he was still groping toward his destiny and fashioning his abiding personal views of life and living, he may have produced his major dramas from an urge to give expression to conclusions which were of such transcending importance to himself rather than from any particular desire to influence others. But in his later years he worked very definitely toward a single great goal. It consisted of nothing less than an attempt to reshape the political and spiritual life of his people.

It is, of course, still much too early to say whether Paul Ernst will ultimately be regarded primarily as a novelist, a critic, or a dramatist. But one thing can be said even now without any fear of successful contradiction, namely that he strove to merit a position in history much higher than any which could be described by any such single term. He strove to become a leader, a reformer of social conditions, perhaps the founder of a new religion and new social order.

Proof of such intentions can be found in many plain declarations to that effect as well as in a summary of those works which filled the last decade and a half of his life. Chief of them are his Kaiserbuch and his Heiland. In the former of these, a momentous composition of nearly 100,000 verses, the political philosopher in Paul Ernst portrays what he considers to be the most glorious three centuries of German, as well as European, history to the end that his people might be persuaded to return to the ways of their fathers and thus to renewed vigor, happiness, and fortune. In the other, the Heiland, the spiritual leader in Paul Ernst attempts a reinterpretation and revitalization of Christianity,

aiming thereby to bring about a spiritual and moral regeneration of his people and develop for them, if possible, a permanently satisfactory way of life. Lest it should seem that such an estimate would attach too much importance to the Heiland, it may be added that Paul Ernst intended to follow up this brief epic with a comprehensive work on religion which he was planning when he died.

As a novelist and dramatist, Paul Ernst had finished his work by 1917. As a social and political philosopher and as a spiritual guide he had just reached the height of his career when it ended. Whether it be true, as has been suggested, that he was led to so searching an investigation of moral values and their application on so large a scale by his earlier research in the field of dramatic form, or whether it might be more nearly accurate to regard his efforts in esthetics as more or less of an interlude between his early attempts in social and political reform through the medium of the Socialist party, and his later all-consuming passion to accomplish the same results by literary methods: in either case, all the energies of his later years were bent to this one purpose. As an inspired and inspiring literary leader, he sought to point his people toward their destiny.

Taking such a comprehensive view of the totality of Paul Ernst's life and work we have found it convenient to mark the War period as an important break between the years of preparation and apprenticeship (however productive these may have been of possibly lasting works) and the years of mastery and conscious devotion to a great cause. The products of precisely this period contain much valuable material, the discovery and development of which will aid materially in forming a correct estimate of Paul Ernst and a proper appreciation of his life work.

It is to the study of this material that the present dissertation is devoted. By analyzing an

essay in which Paul Ernst attempted to clarify his thinking at this time and by tracing the details of a comparison inferentially suggested there by the author himself, it endeavors to throw light in general upon the poet's career and particularly upon his work as a dramatist and an ethical philosopher. This essay, entitled Don Carlos, presents an analysis and discussion of Schiller's drama of the same name. It leads one quite naturally to a comparison of Paul Ernst with Schiller. And it is the intention of this investigation to examine this essay with this comparison in mind, (1) to ascertain as correctly and fully as possible Paul Ernst's attitude toward and the extent of the critique of Schiller, (2) to trace and to analyze any resultant influence upon the trend of recent Schiller research, (3) to compare Ernst and Schiller in regard to their respective theories of dramatic art and tragedy.

The method of procedure includes the following steps, (1) a survey of opinions regarding Paul Ernst as published in recent commentaries on German literature, (2) an investigation of those of Paul Ernst's published works which contain material pertinent to the subject, (3) an intensive study of his theoretical works, (4) an examination of Schiller's dramatic and philosophical works in the light of new contributions made to Schiller scholarship and research since the War.⁹

Most of our information has been drawn from the six volumes of Paul Ernst's autobiographical and theoretical writings, entitled respectively, Jugenderinnerungen, Jünglingsjahre,¹⁰ Erdachte

⁹Note: Dr. Karl A. Kutzbach, secretary and archivist of the Paul Ernst Gesellschaft has written to this writer under date of September 9, 1937, as follows: "Keine der damaligen Rezensionen hat meines Wissens zum Schiller-Kapitel Beachtenswertes gesagt. Eine wirklich gründliche Auseinandersetzung mit dem "Z.d.d.I." fehlt noch bis heute."

¹⁰(Abbreviated: Jüngl.)

Gespräche,¹¹ Tagebuch eines Dichters,¹² Ein Credo,¹³ and Der Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus.¹⁴ The following essays contained for the most part within these volumes have proved to be particularly valuable in our study. They are listed as follows in the order of their approximate importance, with page references and dates added.

No.	Title	Place	Year of Composition
1.	Don Carlos	Z.d.d.I., p. 231	1916-1917
2.	Einleitung	Z.d.d.I., p. 7	1916-1917
3.	Schiller als Dramatiker	Credo I, p. 143	1903-1912
4.	Kabale und Liebe	Credo I, p. 102	1903-1912
5.	In der Ewigkeit	E.G., p. 317	1912-1922
6.	Das tragische Königsideal	N.L. xxxvi, 2	Late ?
7.	Gott	E.G., p. 285	1912-1922
8.	Lear	W.z.F., p. 171	1906
9.	Der Prinz von Homburg	Z.d.d.I., p. 309	1916-1917
10.	Das Gewissen	E.G., p. 295	1912-1922
11.	Tragödie und Erlösungsdrama	Credo, p. 30	1916-1917
12.	Über das Tragische	E.G., p. 135	1912-1922
13.	Zur Shakespearefrage	Z.d.d.I., p. 167	1916-1917
14.	Die Seligkeitslehre	Tagebuch, p. 279	1919
15.	Idealismus und Positivismus	E.G., p. 261	1912-1922

Our presentation of the material is arranged according to the following outline:

(1) In the first section, entitled "Paul Ernst as a Student and Admirer of Schiller," it is our purpose to present the important factors in Paul Ernst's life which predisposed him either to agree or to differ with Schiller in a general outlook upon life. A résumé of Paul Ernst's philosophy will be

¹¹ (Abbreviated: E.G.)

¹² (Abbreviated: Tagebuch)

¹³ (Abbreviated: Credo)

¹⁴ (Abbreviated: Z.d.d.I.)

added to bring out such agreements and differences.

(2) In the second section, entitled "Paul Ernst as a Critic of Schiller," the essay on Don Carlos is analyzed, criticized, and compared with other statements of Paul Ernst on Schiller. The matter of its influence upon recent Schiller research is discussed in connection with a review of eight outstanding contributions to the same problem.

(3) In the final section, entitled "Paul Ernst as a Dramatist After the Manner of Schiller," an attempt is made to evaluate Paul Ernst's dramatic theories in terms of Schiller's ideas and to prove that Paul Ernst deserves to be known as a writer who, a century later, continued a struggle for essentially the same ethical values and esthetic principles as those which Schiller professed.

Part One

PAUL ERNST AS A STUDENT AND ADMIRER OF SCHILLER

1. Lives.

"Für alle Zeiten und über alle Kunstschulen behält volle Geltung Schillers Mahnwort, dasz der wahre Dichter mit erhabenem Sinn das Grosze in das Leben legen müsse, nicht darin suchen dürfe. Und wie verschieden von Schillers eigenen Werken das deutsche Drama und die ganze deutsche Literatur künftig sich auch gestalten mögen, ein Höchstes und dauernd Wertvolles wird nur geschaffen werden, wenn ... im Dichter mit der Begabung auch der ernste sittliche Sinn und das stolze Verantwortungsgefühl des Künstlers für die ihm anvertrauten Geistesgaben sich einen."¹

These are the words with which Max Koch concluded his history of German literature in 1910. They present a certain point of view and offer a prescription which is unlikely to be improved upon. Great poets unite within themselves both genius and character. That Schiller possessed this combination to an unusual degree is admitted by all; for it is on record that he was honored as a man for many years when his importance as a poet had been forgotten temporarily.

It is not necessary to attempt to make out a similar case for Paul Ernst in order to justify a comparison of the two men as men of character. Yet it is true that there are as many striking similarities in their lives and in the influences which

¹Vogt und Koch, Geschichte der Deutschen Literatur, Leipzig, 1910, ii, p. 575.

molded them as in their respective philosophies, their theories of drama, and their literary art. Among the forces that molded Schiller, the following stand out: his ancestry, his stern training at home, his religion, the Karlsschule, frequent frustration, economic struggles, and his failing health. These factors can be paralleled, almost point for point, in the evolution of the character of Paul Ernst.

Whereas Schiller was born in Württemberg, Paul Ernst first saw the light of day among the northern slopes of the Harz Mountains, in the province of Hannover. Though a few hundred miles farther north and somewhat more severe in climate, Paul Ernst's homeland was very similar to Schiller's. As in the case of Schiller's Swabia, its hills and woodlands were peopled by hard-working, honest folk, as indigenous to the soil almost as the century-old oaks which shaded their roofs. Schiller's father was a petty officer in the army, used to life filled with responsibilities and dangers and demanding strict self-discipline at all times. Paul Ernst's father was a supervisor in the silver mines near his native town Elbingerode. Regular attention to duties in a man's world, constant exposure to danger, necessary frugality, mark his career as definitely as that of Johann Kaspar Schiller. Their attitudes toward religion, too, would seem to have been identical. Pious, orthodox Lutheranism pervaded both homes. Daily family devotions were the rule. A sense of values other than those measured by personal advantage or pleasure was woven into the very fibers of Paul Ernst's soul as it had been woven into Schiller's.

Their early education and schooling also present points in common. Schiller was early sent to a military academy. Repression, rather than education, became the order of the day. Paul Ernst's school life was not as severe, but he complains repeatedly of uninteresting sessions in the classroom and of unsympathetic teachers. " ... die verhaszte Schule mit den dummen, ungebildeten, stumpfen und

gleichgültigen Lehrern ..." is one formulation of his later recollection of his boyhood days.² During his senior year at the "Gymnasium" this maladjustment became so disturbing that it necessitated his removal to another school some distance away.

Later came in both cases the study of theology. Their parents or circumstances had so decreed without consulting the wishes of the individuals concerned. Only after protracted struggles did Schiller change to the study of medicine and Paul Ernst first to philosophy and then to economics. The youthful, revolutionary urge to become active as leaders and reformers, if not as revolutionaries, of the economic beliefs and social conditions of their peoples must have been equally strong in both men as they approached the age of twenty. Schiller gave vent to this urge in the writing of The Robbers. Paul Ernst joined the Socialist party and became politically active.

Two more striking similarities also deserve mention. Neither young man had ever been robust in health. In both cases internal struggles and the vicissitudes of economic insecurity, not to speak of undernourishment, combined with the strains resulting from long-continued overwork and finally caused a complete breakdown in health. Paul Ernst had the advantage of being able to go to a sanatorium, recovered, and finally lived to be 67 years of age, while Schiller, even with an unequalled assertion of the power of mind over matter, was able to stretch his span of life but to 46 years. But though it was an advantage for Paul Ernst from one point of view, it merely served, after all, to prolong a struggle against an unkind fate, which was much shorter in the case of Schiller.

As literary artists, both men showed a marked and life-long preference for the drama. They strove to present clashes and conflicts, defeats and

² E. G., p. 264.

victories in dramatic form, to attain a mastery over which they wrestled and struggled ceaselessly. Both were very interested in dramatic theory and in general esthetic problems. Like Kleist, Grillparzer and Hebbel, they were born dramatists.

2. Experiences.

Hermann Gumbel,³ taking his cue from G. Witkowski,⁴ has lately amassed a surprising amount of evidence tending to show that, if Schiller had lived a little longer, he would very probably have gone down in literary history not as an idealist but as a realist. Not only does this tendency seem to have gained control when death overtook him, according to this writer, but he had already composed many a line in that vein, emphasizing a realistic bent of mind, the true content of which was never recognized, largely because preconceived notions as to Schiller's idealistic philosophy seem constantly to have misplaced the emphasis. If Gumbel's premises are correct, Schiller was, moreover, on his way not only to renounce his previous beliefs but to become an outspoken pessimist and epicurean as well.

Later we shall deal with Gumbel's conclusions in some detail. Here the simple reference is made in order to indicate that yet another and very important point of similarity might have been added to those listed in the preceding pages if death had not cut Schiller's career short. For precisely such a complete collapse of his whole earlier outlook upon life and an exchange for its opposite was the next great event in the life of Paul Ernst.

He had been brought up in a small and remote community in which the feudal and guild systems had survived longer than elsewhere. There were masters

³ "Die realistische Wendung des späten Schiller," Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts Frankfurt am Main, Halle, 1932-33, pp. 131-162.

⁴ Aus Schillers Werkstatt, Leipzig, 1910.

and there were servants, and everybody had his own little place in the scheme of things. Life moved along in quite definitely established channels. "Ich wurzle noch in der alten Zeit, die sich in meiner Heimat ... länger gehalten hatte als sonstwo"⁵ he writes, and it is never except with a deep yearning for a return of such "good old days" that he repeats this observation. Away at school, Clausthal had merely continued for him such impressions of the orderliness of all existence and later Göttingen had done nothing to disturb them.

But when he arrived in Berlin, in 1886, he found there an entirely different world, a disintegrating bourgeois society and a proletariat: nervous, distraught, insecure and despairing human beings. He did not fit into this metropolitan society; and he did not understand it. A paralyzing melancholy came upon him. For a while he found company in the literary club "Durch" but not for long, for the other members were far too different from him, as he learned upon closer acquaintance. "Heute ist mir ja ganz klar, dasz ich in diese Gesellschaft nicht hinein gehörte--aber in eine andere gehörte ich eben auch nicht."⁶ "Wenn ich versuche, meinen damaligen Zustand zu verstehen, komme ich vor allem auf das Gefühl der Vereinsamung."⁷ "Das Gefühl der Einsamkeit war wohl sehr wichtig."⁸ Not only was it important, says a recent study of Paul Ernst's development, it was " ... vielleicht das tiefste persönliche Erlebnis Paul Ernsts."⁹

Schiller, too, had known such feelings. The flight from Stuttgart and the long-continued exile from his homeland were sufficient cause of that loneliness in themselves. But in his most forsaken hours Schiller had always found some friends to turn to --

⁵ Jugenderinnerungen, p. 12.

⁶ Jünger, p. 136.

⁷ Ibid., p. 81.

⁸ Loc. cit.

⁹ H. O. Burger, "Der Weg Paul Ernsts im Drama;" Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, xxv, 5/6 (Mai/Juni 1937), p. 206.

friends who were willing to listen to him and who were often really helpful. For Paul Ernst, however, life was constantly a lone man's battle against the world.

Such extreme moods of loneliness, then, differentiate him from Schiller. Their influence can be traced through all his poetic productions. Whereas Schiller may be spoken of as the prophet of a system of thought which was just then in vogue, and as the exponent of the feelings of his generation, Paul Ernst remained, until the end, in constant isolation from, and, later, violent opposition to, all the accepted thinking of his day. And thus, whereas Schiller had early tasted the sweetness of success and, in time, that of national acclaim, Paul Ernst never found any recognition at all, at least not until the last few years of his life.

All these things will explain a note of bitterness and resignation in many of his writings up to about 1910. They will also help to emphasize a high degree of self-assurance and serenity in his later days, after he had successfully weathered the storm. They will, finally, guide us toward an understanding of what he has to say in a religious way about faith, redemption, grace and the sonship of God.

If this degree of loneliness may hereafter be referred to as the first of the great new experiences differentiating Paul Ernst from Schiller, an intense feeling of pity may be listed as the second one. It grew out of the combination of two circumstances. One of these was that Paul Ernst's connection with the naturalistic movement made him acquainted with several Socialistic agitators who were active in Berlin just at that time. The other was an avid, uncritical reading of Tolstoi. Together, these influences drew him into the activities of the Socialist party and into its whole ideology. They also upset his whole emotional balance. He could no longer walk past a beggar without becoming conscious of an impulse to share his last silver coins

with him. Wherever he saw misery, he was violently affected. "Ich fühlte, dasz es meine Schuld war, dasz sie hungerten, und dasz ich mich nicht freuen durfte, solange Unglück auf der Welt war."¹⁰

To be sure, he later regained first his intellectual and later his emotional balance. He came to see that Tolstoi was not a Christian but a disciple of Schopenhauer, and that both he and Karl Marx were not to be looked upon as the saviors of the world but as hopelessly misguided romanticists. But this insight did not come until after he had spent some of the best years of his young manhood in a cause which he later came to despise. It might have been delayed much longer if a nearly fatal illness had not given him much time to reflect.

Aside from revealing the highly altruistic possibilities in his own soul, this socialistic interlude in Paul Ernst's life is notable because it caused him to make the study of economic and sociological problems a major interest for the rest of his life, and because it probably determined by the sheer force of contrast and opposition that aristocratic attitude, that lack of sympathy for the common run of men, that concentration upon the few best individuals of the race, for which his dramas are noted. Whatever there is in his future thinking that is reminiscent of Nietzschean detachment as well as much of the fierceness of his later opposition to the Naturalistic writers and to political socialism has its roots in his experiences during those initial years in Berlin.

The third great experience which made Paul Ernst the kind of philosopher and poet he later came to be was one of despair, black, hopeless despair. It came upon him as a result of his disillusionment with the socialist and Marxian programs. The intensity of his former enthusiasm became now a measure of the depth of his present gloom. His health was restored, but his life seemed purposeless. Everywhere

¹⁰ Jüngl., p. 163.

he felt intellectual, moral, and social chaos. He needed a moral purposiveness to sustain himself. Otherwise he might as well commit suicide or, lacking the courage for that, hope for delivery from the burden of life by a merciful insanity. Schiller, too, had considered that fate had dealt unkindly with him. But what broke down the spirit of Paul Ernst was the realization that fate was dealing cruelly with the whole race. Life, as he saw it in Berlin during the middle nineties, was not worth living. "Man muss meinen Zustand wohl als Verzweiflung bezeichnen."¹¹ Yet: "Durch sie (Verzweiflung) wurde ich zum Dichter gebildet."¹² All his early tragedies sprang from just this experience and from this standpoint they are to be interpreted. Brunhild particularly, in which the superior individual gives up her life when it becomes intolerable, is the result of this despair. In no other way is this drama to be interpreted. The heroine's suicide is vicariously the suicide of the poet.

Closely connected with such words of despair is the next basic experience, that of necessity. Paul Ernst assigns to it surpassing importance, especially when he compares himself with Schiller, whose predominating experience, he says, was a consciousness of freedom. Psychologically, the use of the word necessity seems to be Paul Ernst's answer to the sense of utter frustration and purposelessness which filled his soul. Is it a rationalization of his instinctive decision not to end his life? Whatever its source, its content is a belief in a deterministic world order; its result, fatalism. Time and again Paul Ernst says: "Ich lebte nicht, ich wurde gelebt."¹³

A more detailed account of this attitude to life will have to be given in another connection. Here its mere mention will simply serve the purposes of completeness. With the experiences of

¹¹ Ibid, p. 159.

¹² Loc. cit.

¹³ Op. cit., p. 81.

loneliness, pity, and despair it describes that series of conditionings by which a poet who was in every respect the counterpart of Schiller in his early days came to be, nevertheless, in many other respects, quite unlike him in his later years. Or did Schiller go through a similar evolutionary process of which little has been said?

A few words concerning Paul Ernst's religious experience must be added. However this important experience is to be described or explained, it constitutes one of the major factors in his life. All his works from 1910 onward are colored by it. Not one of his "Erlösungsdramen" would have been written without it; the Kaiserbuch is full of allusions to it, and his Heiland as well as his two autobiographical volumes read like one continuous confession of their author's faith. A fuller discussion of this last named and final experience must also be deferred until later in the development of our theme.

Up to this point it has been our purpose merely to trace the most important steps in Paul Ernst's development, which reveal any similarity or possible relationship to Schiller.

3. Influences.

Turning now from the historical and experiential factors that helped to mold Paul Ernst's thinking, it may be well to remind ourselves of two generally accepted principles of interpretation and analysis of human nature.

The first of these was stated by Fichte: - "Was für eine Philosophie man hat, hängt davon ab, was man für ein Mensch ist." It stresses the relatively much greater value of hereditary factors and personal experiences in the molding of one's character, attitudes and ideas, as contrasted to the value of mere learning and cogitation. Inferentially, it would brand much of our often supposedly original thinking as rationalization after the fact. Applied to Paul Ernst, it will guard us against attaching undue importance to so-called literary influences.

What he read often helped to crystallize his thoughts or to accentuate interests which he had already taken up for reasons of his own. At times it helped his groping soul to find such interests earlier, perhaps, and easier. But the urge to grope toward such new goals sprang from much deeper sources. It sprang from the agonies of his soul, as he himself has said.

The other principle in hermeneutics and psychology demands a careful distinction between ideational influences which come early into a man's life and those which come much later. The former are incomparably the stronger. In times of emotional stress, or under the weakness or exhaustion of approaching death, they will often nearly eliminate the effects of the latter. These principles are enunciated so clearly here because they will guide us, in important ways, toward our final conclusions in the investigation of the relationship of Paul Ernst and Schiller.

Not only were Paul Ernst's ancestry and his early upbringing in many essentials strikingly similar to those of Schiller, as we have shown, but his early thinking was fashioned inescapably by an early, spontaneous, and long-continued interest in this poet, upon whom he lavished all the enthusiasm of his childhood and his youth. He frequently read the volumes of Schiller's works which his father had acquired as a young man. "Im preuszischen Kinderfreund, in der Bibel und in Schillers Werken habe ich lesen gelernt."¹⁴ He reports, moreover, that he committed long passages to memory and that he continued to like Schiller's works better than those of any other poet, although he later read voluminously. All the way through the "Gymnasium" he retained this preference; and when the time came to write a final thesis for graduation, he chose as his topic the last lines from Schiller's Braut von Messina and entitled it,

¹⁴Ibid., p. 97.

"Der Uebel grösstes ist die Schuld."¹⁵ A year later he traveled to Tübingen, where he attended the university, proceeding by way of Frankfurt am Main and Marbach. At Frankfurt he stopped to visit the "Goethehaus" and was thrilled by the experience. But when he came to Marbach, the birthplace of Schiller, and entered the room where Schiller was born, the effect upon his soul was greater. He writes in his memoirs:

So hatte ich denn in diesem Stübchen nicht das Gefühl der Feierlichkeit, sondern es war mir alles vertraut und heimlich; es war nicht mehr ein Auszen, wie die Räume in Frankfurt, sondern es gehörte zu mir, es war in mir.¹⁶

This attitude changed to coolness and doubt during the interlude of Naturalism and Socialism which covered the time from 1886 until 1900. During the early part of this period he rapidly lost all the confidence he had ever had in himself and became desperately lonely and despondent. Later a serious illness proved fortunate in that it gave him time to reflect. When he recovered, he calculated his chances of living a life of normal length and, much as Schiller had done, began to lay plans for the future. One of his conclusions at that time was that he needed to regain old moorings, if possible, or to find new ones. Finally he decided that he had to do the latter. But first he returned to the old ones for re-examination and re-evaluation. It was thus that he re-read his Schiller. Conscious of his later differences, he writes, with particular reference to this period:

"Aber ich habe doch nie die Fäden zu unserer deutschen Dichtung abgeschnitten:

¹⁵"Der junge Paul Ernst," Jahrbuch 1937 der Paul Ernst Gesellschaft, Langensalza, p. 20.

¹⁶Jünger., pp. 97/98.

zum grössten Teil mag Ursache der erhaltende Zug meines Wesens sein, den ich als meinen grössten Vorteil in dieser Welt der Zerstörung empfinde; aber die Bilder von den beiden Häusern in Frankfurt und Marbach haben doch auch gewirkt. So ist es mir später möglich geworden, trotz der Einsicht, dasz unsere grosze Dichtung zu Ende ist und notwendig zu Ende gehen muszte durch einen inneren Fehler, doch innerlich an sie anzuknüpfen und dergestalt eine geistige Heimat zu behalten."¹⁷

A third stage in Paul Ernst's attitude toward Schiller developed gradually. Its character has already been indicated in the above quotation. It cannot be called an estrangement. But years of study and experience ripened in Paul Ernst a philosophy of life and theories of the drama, which he imagined to be quite at odds with those of the classicist Schiller.

There may have been a fourth stage. After the early enthusiasm of childhood, adult study and re-examination, and mature, though perhaps partly mistaken, divergence of opinions, there may have come upon Paul Ernst a new insight and understanding as well as appreciation of Schiller during his later years. He may have found new reasons which might have led him to retract some of his criticisms or, at any rate, to modify their violent formulations which, as they stand, remind one of Otto Ludwig in their seeming unfriendliness. Also, he may have sensed, during the last years of his life, a new kinship with a Schiller, whose picture has become somewhat changed by recent research from the form in which it has been known to several older generations, which often devoted to him much more admiration and lip-service than study and critical appreciation. Paul Ernst may have passed into this final

¹⁷Loc. cit., p. 98.

stage of his contacts with Schiller. But we do not know; we can only conjecture. Autobiographical material is not complete for the last period of his life.

There is, however, this much to be considered: no matter how severe his strictures, Paul Ernst at no time in his life ceased to respect Schiller and hold him in reverence. Both before and after--indeed much later than--the period of his keen critical attitude, he wrote very laudatory appreciations of the man and the poet. And one other simple fact, not generally known, has some bearing here. In 1916 (i.e., the same year when the highly critical essay on Don Carlos appeared!) Paul Ernst had prepared a little volume on Schiller intended for wide distribution among the masses. It was never published. But a competent scholar who read the manuscript says of it: "Ich fand bemerkenswert, dasz ... die sonstige Kritik an Schiller fortblieb."¹⁸ Paul Ernst was willing to devote considerable time to a new popularization of Schiller at the very time when he felt constrained to say some very harsh things about him!

No other attachment Paul Ernst ever formed, aside from those which connected him with his family and his people, can compare in intensity with the love he bore Schiller. No other intellectual conquests yielded him returns as beneficial as those which he gathered from the great dramas, particularly, of this master. Yet there were other such attachments and conquests. Tolstoi has already been mentioned. The name of Dostoyefsky might be added and, in that connection, the name of Kierkegaard. Among philosophical studies, the Philosophie des Unbewussten, by Hartmann, made a most profound impression upon him. Other than those, we shall

¹⁸ Karl August Kutzbach, secretary of the Paul Ernst Gesellschaft, in a letter to the present writer.

mention merely the wholly unavoidable acquaintance with Goethe's writings and the extensive agreement with Nietzsche's philosophy.

Paul Ernst was not attracted to Goethe. He mentions him only infrequently and then as merely a "bürgerlicher Dichter" or in terms carrying some such connotation.¹⁹ This is curious; for though Paul Ernst was in no sense a lyrical poet like Goethe, and though his chief characteristics are those of strength and hardness, rather than tenderness, he did have at least three elements in common with him as a thinker; and one might have expected him to have recognized the fact. He started with a very similar epistemology; he sought after the same universal comprehensiveness; and he shared entirely Goethe's inherent conservatism.

Speaking in detail concerning the first one of these three analogies only, it may be well to do so in terms which have gained considerable currency with the study of the philosophy of Ludwig Klages: logocentric and biocentric. They are intended to describe succinctly the difference between thinkers who start from mental abstractions and then interpret life according to these abstractions, and those other thinkers who have no preconceived notions and, therefore, approach the problems of living more pragmatically. In the first group would be Socrates, Plato, the Christian dogmatists, Kant, and Schiller. In the latter group would be the older Greek philosophers and then, among moderns, Goethe and Nietzsche.

Werner Deubel, an enthusiastic disciple of Klages, has elaborated these distinctions as applied to literary men and, on the basis of them, drawn a sharp delineation between the biocentric Goethe and the logocentric Schiller.²⁰ He is of the opinion that Paul Ernst should be ranged with Schiller in any such general classification, regarding him as

¹⁹Cf. Tagebuch, p. 179.

²⁰"Umriss eines neuen Schillerbildes," Jahrbuch der Goethe-gesellschaft, xx (1934), pp. 1/64.

" ... im Wesentlichen doch ein Logozentriker..."²¹
 No doubt he could marshal a good many arguments in support of such a thesis. Nevertheless, there is one formidable fact which must not be neglected: in his epistemology Paul Ernst is decidedly biocentric. True, he could say, "Dieser Geist ist das Einzige, das wirklich ist."²² But his "Geist" is a speculative conclusion, not a premise; an assumption for practical purposes, not a principle; an "a posteriori," and not an "a priori" factor. His reasoning is to a purpose, not from a concept. The urge to continue existence and to satisfy healthy appetites is the source and main-spring of his thinking. "Sonst könnte ich ja nicht leben!"²³--only to that purpose does he construct mental abstractions. They support his purposes; they do not control his aims.

Perhaps Paul Ernst should, therefore, be spoken of as having achieved a synthesis between Socratic, Platonic, Christian, Schillerian logocentrism and Hellenic, Germanic, Goethean, Nietzschean biocentrism. His attitude toward Christianity would seem to offer much support for such a judgment. But even if this last tentative claim for Paul Ernst should prove too daring, there can be no doubt but that he is in fundamental agreement with a biocentrically oriented Goethe in the proposition that life should control thought, rather than the reverse. Goethe's unerring "Lebensgefühl" and his belief in the validity of his instincts are reflected in ever so many passages from Paul Ernst.

As for Goethe, H. A. Korff has contributed these formulations, in his Lebensidee Goethes:

Die Harmonie des Goethischen Lebens ...
 beruht auf dem ruhigen Gleichmasze, in dem
 sich Goethe dem Zuge der Entwicklung

²¹ In a letter to this writer.

²² E.G., p. 306.

²³ E.G., p. 127.

überlässt."²⁴ "Die Ruhe in der Bewegung,
der Friede in der Arbeit, das Beharren bei
aller Entwicklung: das ist das grosse
Geheimnis des Goethischen Lebens und das
Geheimnis, das wir Späteren--verloren haben,
das Geheimnis des klassischen Menschen."²⁵

Paul Ernst may speak for himself. His admiring admission, "Goethe hatte sich zuletzt zu dem Gefühl der ungeheuren Weltharmonie hindurchgerungen,"²⁶ is matched by passages like the following from his dramas, beautifully expressing a similar "Naturgebundenheit." In Manfred und Beatrice, Manfred says:

Gott schreitet langsam über Berg und Tal,
Und streut mit gleicher Hand den Samen aus.
Und auf den guten und geringen Boden
Fällt sein gesätes Korn:
... ..
Tragt tausenfach, wuchst Ihr auf gutem Boden,
Tragt, was Ihr könnt, wenn arm die Erde war,
Fragt nicht: was soll ich tun? Wachst nur
und tragt.²⁷

And in Ariadne auf Naxos, Theseus proclaims:

Nicht Gleiches ist den Menschen aufgegeben.
Als einen Steinblock schuf uns die Natur,
Roh, ungeformt, und Gottes Stimme ruft
Dem Marmor zu, dasz er sich bilden soll:
Zum Arbeitsmanne der, zum König der.
Gehorchen musz ein jeder dieser Stimme,
Tun was er kann, dasz er sein Bild erschafft;
Und gleichen Wert vor Gott hat jedes Bild,
Wenn nur die Arbeit gleich vollendet ist.²⁸

²⁴ H. A. Korff, Die Lebensidee Goethes, Leipzig, 1925, p. 16.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 170.

²⁶ Tagebuch, p. 29.

²⁷ Dramen, III, p. 11.

²⁸ Dramen II, p. 357.

So far as Paul Ernst's relationship to Nietzsche is concerned, we may profitably refer once again to Werner Deubel.²⁹ It is his opinion that, among moderns, Goethe was one of the first to break away from the logocentric thinking originated by Socrates and Plato and popularized, as well as fortified, by the Christian church. But Goethe, in his judgment, did so intuitively and unphilosophically. It remained for Nietzsche, according to Deubel, to perceive clearly the contrast between two radically opposed schools of thought. Referring to the classical and formalistic artistic ideas of the past as "Apollonian" and formulating his opposition to them as "Dionysian," he became the mediator between Goethe and the present. Deubel assumes that Ludwig Klages' "Lebensphilosophie" represents the modern viewpoint. Be that as it may, the development from Schiller to Paul Ernst leads by way of Nietzsche, and it may be well to divide its course into two sections or periods: the first from Schiller to Nietzsche, and the second from Nietzsche to Paul Ernst.

The first of these has been surveyed in great detail by Cysarz, in his book entitled, Von Schiller zu Nietzsche.³⁰ The style of the book is difficult to understand. The terminology is formidable and the sweep of the periods and paragraphs cannot always be followed with clarity and ease. But the main theme is repeated so often and in such a large number of variations that there can be no doubt as to Cysarz's main intent. Roughly, he sees Schiller as the apostle of what is essentially, characteristically, and eternally human. "Der Wille ist der Geschlechtscharakter des Menschen." Then Cysarz looks upon all the intervening writers, Romanticists and Realists, as having lost sight of these important values and as having become lost in the woods of infinite, confusing, temporary details. Nietzsche finally appears to him as having sounded once again,

²⁹ Op. cit.

³⁰ Halle, Niemeyer, 1928.

and very forcefully, the call for a return to ideas of real worth: not man in his "milieu," however embellished by the Romanticists or stripped to his nakedness by the Realists, but man facing the universe, not a prattling philistine, but a hero, doing battle valiantly and with a battle-cry for victory on his lips.

Kleist, Grillparzer, and Hebbel seem to Cysarz to have carried on this Schillerian tradition until Nietzsche appeared to achieve a higher synthesis. Speaking of them, he says:

Ueberall ... dämmert bereits ein Quantum jener Spannung von Schillerisch-Monumentalem und un-Schillerisch-Interessantem, von Apriorität und Mannigfaltigkeit der Werte, wie sie, gebettet in eine umfassende Kontrapunktik der Lebens-und Kunstbegriffe, das XX. Jahrhundert ... wieder in Schillers Bahnen schwenken heisst. Derjenige nun, der solches Neben-und Gegeneinander erstmals zum Ineinander läutert, der dadurch eine neue Mächtigkeit der Seele zeitigt, geradezu eine neue Klassizität aus und über dem Chaos des Maschinen-und Massen-Jahrhunderts, der Atlas füglich auch unserer Brücke zu Schiller, ist Friedrich Nietzsche.³¹

Having thus recommended Nietzsche as a bridge for us moderns to Schiller, Cysarz then views Schiller as standing in the very center of German "Geistesgeschichte."

Als Dichter des Höchsten ... wird Schiller zum Bildner des Willens, und als Dichter des Willens wird Schiller zum Priester der ewigen Werte des Menschen. In Schillers Hand werden Wesensstil und Willensstil eins (nicht nur harmonisch

³¹Op. cit., pp. 9/10.

eins, sondern auch kontrapunktisch)--und hierin liegt die vielleicht stärkste Uebereinstimmung zwischen Schiller und unserer heutigen, zugleich aber auch zwischen Schiller und der frühesten Germanen-Dichtung: sowohl ein Jahrhundert- wie auch ein Jahrtausend-Bogen.³²

This latter quotation, particularly the phrase: " ... hierin liegt die vielleicht stärkste Uebereinstimmung zwischen Schiller und unserer heutigen ... Dichtung," seems to point very definitely in the direction of Paul Ernst. To be sure, Cysarz does not so intend it. He is not familiar with Paul Ernst's critical essays, and of course, many of them were scattered and inaccessible to him prior to the time he wrote, in 1928. He was not impressed by his reading of Paul Ernst's poetical works. His novels seem to him to have "eine Art innere Klassizität"³³ and to have been written in the language of Luther³⁴; but his dramas merit no praise beyond being called, rather derisively, "dramaturgische Seminare."³⁵

Nevertheless, though not intended to be so interpreted, Cysarz' words fit Paul Ernst quite well, for it was Paul Ernst's lifelong purpose to achieve precisely this "kontrapunktische Einheit des Wesens und Willens." Cysarz himself felt that the literary school of which Paul Ernst was the recognized head tended in the right direction. He says:

"... unter den Jüngeren ... (erwächst) ... der Schillersche Drang nach dem Monumental-Idealen, der bergeversetzende furor teutonicus, die Liebe zu allem zermalmend-erhebenden Schicksal."³⁶

³² Ibid., p. 6.

³³ Ibid., p. 27.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 300.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 27.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 361.

Just why Cysarz never recognized Paul Ernst as the very man for whom he was looking to continue the Schiller-Nietzsche tradition it is hard to say. If he could have read the autobiographical volume Jünglingsjahre, he would certainly have recognized Paul Ernst's all-absorbing passionate desire to show his people the way to a new unity, a new harmony in life--and a harmony, very definitely, which is not achieved by compromises but by a courageous embrace both of the facts of life and the will to live according to those facts.

Paul Ernst may indeed not have much "furor teutonicus," but his "amor fati" is written on every page of his mature works. Walter Linden is right when he refers to them as a "Rückkehr zur altgriechischen Schicksalsdramatik."³⁷ And in the place of that "furor teutonicus" he has a calmness, a quiet courage, a sureness, a faith, which would seem to be a fine substitute for it, if indeed it does not represent a step forward from it. For the "furor teutonicus" may easily become a mere pose and degenerate into acting, whereas Paul Ernst's substitute appears to offer a better solution.

Then, of course, it must not be forgotten that it is our purpose here to seek similarities in the philosophies not of Paul Ernst and Nietzsche, but of Paul Ernst and Schiller. From Nietzsche to Paul Ernst there runs a course of change from violent defiance to calm faith. But such violence could never be predicated of the mature Schiller. He might indeed have developed it, though to us, later, it will seem much more probable that he would have ended up as did Paul Ernst. As it is, we can at least say that he never exhibited such violence. Schiller's attitude was heroic, but it was a majestic heroism, a dignified heroism. While, then, Paul Ernst continued, by way of Nietzsche, Schiller's intense search for a harmony in the human soul and a

³⁷ "Paul Ernst: das Weltbild des Dichters," Zeitschrift für Deutschkunde, 1, no. 3 (März 1936), p. 150.

way of life consonant with the dignity of man's divine spirit, he must be said to have returned from Nietzsche to Schiller in the matter of attitude. Eliminating the middle link, there would thus remain the community of interest between Paul Ernst and Schiller in searching for final and comprehensive answers, the common agreement, too, to search quietly and devoutly; but there would be this essential difference: that Schiller merely searched for an escape from his duality, while Paul Ernst seems to have found it.

In another matter, however, there is a wide gulf fixed between Nietzsche and Paul Ernst, as well as between Paul Ernst and Schiller. Both the earlier men were outspoken individualists. For Schiller it may be said that he merely followed the tradition of his times in this respect. German thinking had been individualistic ever since the Protestant Reformation had done away with the mediation of the church and had encouraged the individual to face his God alone. The entire period of the Enlightenment had followed in this evaluation of the individual. It is still the basis of all Western democracies. Of Nietzsche it must be said, however, that he developed this individualism to a new extreme. To be sure, those who took his gospel of the superman as an excuse for license misunderstood Nietzsche tragically or abused him terribly. But he did make the doctrine of individualism the very cornerstone of his philosophic structure.

Paul Ernst denies it categorically and in detail, and repeatedly and at length. For him, the unit is not the individual, but his people, the people to which he belongs and of which he is a part. Schiller had counselled, "Ans Vaterland, ans teure, schliesz' dich an: da sind die starken Wurzeln deiner Kraft!" Substituting the word "Volk" for "Vaterland," this quotation from Tell might well be put as a motto over most of Paul Ernst's works, particularly his Kaiserbuch. Not only would he say that the individual should join his people in order

to increase his own advantage, but that his whole "raison d'être" is to be a part of this larger whole. "Nur indem man teil hat an einer Nation, hat man auch teil an der Menschheit."³⁸

That would seem a far cry from Nietzsche's theory of the superman, but it is not. Paul Ernst is just as aristocratic as Nietzsche in this respect. The distinction is that Paul Ernst sees an aristocracy not so much as the fine flower of all civilization, to which the masses have merely contributed the necessary material support, but, rather, as the moving, energizing, directing, portion of the population, living not off the people, but for them. The value of Paul Ernst's supermen consists not so much in what they are in themselves, as in what they are able to contribute in leadership so that others may have better opportunities to realize their own destinies.

In a sense, then, Paul Ernst's aristocracy is a priesthood, a group of God-inspired prophets, a number of individuals in whom God has become conscious and through whom He directs the affairs of mankind toward destinies of which we have not the slightest inkling. This mysterious common destiny is the one controlling idea in all Paul Ernst's thoughts on man and men. If, then, Schiller and Nietzsche are individualists, Paul Ernst may, by way of contrast be called a collectivist. His prototype of the superman is humble, where Nietzsche's was proud; satisfied, where Nietzsche's was restless; faithful, where Nietzsche's was defiant. But he is again a unity, not a duality; a "Naturwesen," not a creature with a torn soul.

4. Ideas.

A quotation from Korff and Goethe may serve as an almost ideal transition from the preceding discussion of the influences of Goethe and Nietzsche upon Paul Ernst to a discussion of the latter's

³⁸ Credo, p. 50; cf. p. 317.

poetic mission and his philosophical system.

Die Lebensphilosophie ... (der Gegenwart)
... beginnt mit Goethe.... Und der Uebermensch,
dem Goethe entgegenschaut, ist nicht die
'blonde Bestie' des vom Geist des Darwinismus
verwirrten Nietzsche, nicht eine Steigerung
unserer Animalität, sondern eine geistigere
Art des Menschen, von deren Möglichkeit uns
die Dichtung Goethes die seligste Gewisheit
gibt.... Denn das bedeutet für Goethe Dichter
sein: das Höhere zu erschauen und uns anderen
den Blick für dies Höhere zu erschliessen.
Und wundervoll hat der Achtzigjährige dies in
den Vermächtnisversen ausgesprochen:

'Und wie von alters her im Stillen
Ein Liebeswerk nach eignem Willen
Der Philosoph, der Dichter schuf,
So wirst du schönste Gunst erzielen;
Denn edlen Seelen vorzufühlen,
Ist wünschenswertester Beruf.'³⁹

Edlen Seelen vorzufühlen--das in der Tat
war Goethes Beruf.⁴⁰

In a poem, entitled "Das Gebirge" and contained in his Heiland, Paul Ernst brings out this same lofty conception of his own responsibility as a poet in a most descriptive picture. He portrays various types of men as they make their way along a mountain slope. They all climb on different levels and obtain different views of the landscape below as they go higher. Of all men's, the poet's path runs highest, being transcended only by the one trodden by the Son of God.

³⁹ Die Lebensidee Goethes, p. 154.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 165.

Und höher noch, und höher noch,
Steil steigt die Wand, da ist ein Mann,
Der über Klamm und Abgrund nun
Mit Flügelschuhen springen kann.
Das ist der Dichter⁴¹

"... edlen Seelen vorzufühlen," that is the way Goethe had formulated both the opportunity and the responsibility of a poet as a leader of men. Paul Ernst's vision includes the same two elements. They are stressed again in any number of prose statements with a clarity that leaves nothing to be desired. He conceives poets to be mediators between God and men. They are inspired, and, therefore, capable of leading men. Ordinary men depend upon them, and therefore poets must exercise their special abilities, lest the whole race suffer. On inspiration, he says:

Jeder Dichter, der mit dem Jenseitigen verbunden ist, weisz, dasz Gott durch ihn spricht, dasz er nichts zu tun hat, als seinen ganzen inneren Menschen ruhig zu halten, damit er die Stimme Gottes in sich hört....⁴² Ein Mann, der nicht das Bewusstsein der göttlichen Offenbarung hat, ist kein Dichter....⁴³ Gott ... (hat) ... den Dichter eingesetzt ..., um die Menschen zu prüfen, damit er durch sein Urteil sie ändert.⁴⁴

Concerning the poet's opportunity to perform singular and singularly important services, Paul Ernst writes as follows:

⁴¹ P. 144.

⁴² Grundlagen, pp. 70/71.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 595.

⁴⁴ Jüngl., p. 301.

Ein Dichter musz wahr sein, dazu ist er ja Dichter, dasz er den Leuten die Wahrheit zeigt, die sie sonst nicht sehen können...⁴⁵ Von allen Künsten die höchste ist die Dichtung. Sie arbeitet mit dem Wort. Durch das Wort erst hat die Menschheit die Dinge und die Welt geschaffen; ... und ein Geschlecht von Dichtern nach dem anderen arbeitet immer daran, die Welt durch das Wort noch besser zu fassen und zu formen ...⁴⁶ Das ist die letzte Wirkung der Dichtung, dasz sie den Menschen ihr Weltbild gibt ...⁴⁷ Es ist wohl so, dasz in jedem Dichter mit der Geburt ein neues Weltbild geboren wird, das er im Lauf des Lebens nur aus sich heraus zu holen hat; ... er ist ein Gesetzgeber.⁴⁸

To justify the peculiar content of his own poetic productions which almost invariably deal with ethical and religious problems, and in the case of his Heiland and Kaiserbuch remind one of the Book of Isaiah in their religious fervor, Paul Ernst finally says:

Grosze Dichtung ist immer religiös ...⁴⁹
Das Weltbild ist durch Sittlichkeit und
Religion bestimmt.⁵⁰

* * *

The kinship of spirit existing between Paul Ernst and Schiller which one should expect from the similarity in their ancestry, their bringing-up, and many of their mature experiences, and which will appear again in a comparison of their respective theories of drama, is so evident from such passages as the ones quoted above that argument seems superfluous.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 295.

⁴⁶ Credo, p. 295.

⁴⁷ Weg zur Form, (Neuausgabe), p. 449.

⁴⁸ Jünger, p. 105.

⁴⁹ Credo, p. 148.

⁵⁰ Weg zur Form (Neuausgabe), p. 449.

Down in the core of their beings these two men are, both of them, reformers of the human soul, prophets of the dignity of man, and apostles of a "Weltanschauung" either grounded in transcendental ethical values or leading to them. It is our aim now to present this Weltanschauung systematically and concisely, for Paul Ernst's critique of Schiller grows directly out of it.

Epistemology

We moderns have become so thoroughly immeshed in the methods of thought used by the scientist that we are reluctant to believe other methods either valuable or dependable. Hence we are prompted to raise our eyebrows and look quizzically at a man who maintains that he has found an entirely different source of information, especially if he does not hesitate to call this different source divine inspiration. Yet Paul Ernst gives some excellent reasons for his beliefs in an epistemology foreign to our age. They are found, mostly, in his essay on "God" and in a dialogue entitled, "Das Gewissen."

He begins with an attack upon the exorbitant claims of reason and the rationalists. Quoting Nietzsche from memory, he says:

Das diskursive Denken ist dem Menschen von Haus aus gegeben, um sich seine Nahrung zu beschaffen, und nicht um das zu fördern, was er Wahrheit nennt. Wenn man es also zum Wahrheitssuchen verwendet, so verwendet man ein untaugliches Mittel.⁵¹

In his own words:

Unsere Vernunft ... ist ein Werkzeug durch das wir die Vorstellungswelt schaffen, um unser leibliches Leben zu führen: aber sie ist Nichts weiter. Wir können auch nicht mit dem

⁵¹ E.G., p. 271.

Mikroskop einen Begriff untersuchen, und trotzdem ist das Mikroskop ein gutes Werkzeug.⁵²

Similarly, he calls reason " ... ein kleines Licht in dem ungeheuren Raum der Welt, das kaum einen Kreis erhellt, der nur etwas über unsere Füße hinausgeht."⁵³ This limiting evaluation seems justified to him because reason can think only in terms of space, time, and causality, and because these terms are not comprehensive enough, especially not the latter.

Die Geistesverfassung, von der hier die Rede ist, will sich alles Geschehen durch ursächliche Beziehungen erklären und dadurch beherrschen. Sie hat das bis heute gekonnt. Aber wir sehen wie heute das Geschehen nicht mehr vernünftig beherrscht wird. Jene Herrschaft des Verstandes, an die wir bis nun geglaubt haben, war nur eine Selbsttäuschung. Die Macht, welche hinter den menschlichen Ereignissen leitend steht, bediente sich des Verstandes für ihre Zwecke.⁵⁴

Not only is human reason, then, insufficient: it is downright deceptive. It causes us to believe, for instance, that we are free agents, when in fact we are nothing of the sort. Reason serves a good purpose in one department of life, but it must be augmented by other sources of information, in addition to our physical senses, before man can be well oriented for his way through this existence.

That Paul Ernst finds these other sources in the metaphysical intuition, mainly of poets, has already been indicated by a number of quotations. Perhaps one more should be added.

⁵²Gesellschaft, p. 22.

⁵³Credo, p. 263.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 257.

Die Dichtung ist die grösste der Brücken,
die aus dem Jenseits in das Diesseits führen.
... Die Dichter sind die vornehmsten Schöpfer
der Welt.⁵⁵

Thus is emphasized again the uncontrollable, dogmatic nature of the source of Paul Ernst's authority. To all queries into reasons why, he simply answers:

... ein groszer Dichter ist unabhängig
von der Wirklichkeit, er ist unmittelbar
mit Gott verbunden, und Gott legt ihm in
die Seele, was er sagen soll.⁵⁶

Because the poet is so directly the mouthpiece of God (though he is also His creator. Cf. "Er schafft die Welt, in der die Menschen leben; und er schafft den Gott, an den die Menschen glauben."⁵⁷) he often does not know himself what he is saying. It has happened to Paul Ernst that he did not discover until years later the true content and value of statements he had made in a state of what one might call semi-consciousness.

Nevertheless, his thinking has been always purposeful. "Ich habe nie systematisch gedacht, sondern immer nur für bestimmte Zwecke."⁵⁸ And it is highly significant to see that this purpose is always the same, namely, life. Ever mindful of his basic experience of despair, he is anxious, above all, to make this contribution: to make it possible for men, again, to live completely. They merely exist now, he says. In fact, it may be possible to say of Paul Ernst that he always predetermined his goals emotionally, or instinctively, and then merely used his intellect to rationalize these conclusions

⁵⁵ Z.d.d.I., p. 493.

⁵⁶ Ibid, p. 318.

⁵⁷ Grundlagen, p. 595.

⁵⁸ Jugenderinnerungen, p. 281.

as best he could. The multitude of his admitted (!) inconsistencies would seem to demand such an interpretation. A fine illustration is found in an imaginary conversation between Luther and Melancthon.

Luther: Wenn das richtig wäre, was du da sagst, und was mir selber mein Verstand ... auch oft sagt, dann könnte ich ja nicht leben; deshalb (!) kann es nicht richtig sein.

Melancthon: Dann wäre also die Richtigkeit einer Ansicht nicht von ihrer Begründung abhängig, sondern davon, ob sie uns am Leben erhält?⁵⁹

Such are the methodological foundations of the system of thought Paul Ernst erected for himself. For a system it is, despite its unsystematic conception.

Theology

Perhaps this purpose can be seen even in this first article of Paul Ernst's confession of faith, as here outlined, of God. In a quotation just above he had represented the poet as being, at the same time, the mouthpiece and the creator of God. As if man were God's creator, he says:

Uns selber ist im Lauf der Jahrhunderte klar geworden, dasz Gott ein Geschehen in uns ist, nicht ein dämonisches Wesen mit menschlichen und übermenschlichen Eigenschaften.⁶⁰

As if man were the mouthpiece of God, Paul Ernst says:

Unser Verstand kann nur mit seinen angeborenen Formen denken. Diese aber sind ebensowenig geeignet, Gott zu sehen, wie

⁵⁹ E.G., p. 127.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 125.

unsere Augen geeignet sind, die ultravioioletten Streifen des Spektrums zu sehen. Aber ... wir können auch wissen, dasz eine Macht ist, welche wir mit dem Wort Gott bezeichnen. Ein Mann, der rechtschaffen gelebt hat ...: ein socher Mann weisz, dasz Gott ist.⁶¹

Fitting both views is his purpose:

Wir sind in Gott. Gott ist da, um sich zu schauen, und seine Augen, das sind die Menschen. ... In Hunderttausenden von Jahren ... wird es so sein, dasz Gott sich durch alle Menschen wird schauen können. Das hat der grosze Lessing die Erziehung des Menschengeschlechts genannt.⁶²

This purpose is religion, not theology, for--

... als Wissen kann er (d.h. der Mensch) nicht mehr haben als das eine: Gott ist. Niemals kann er über Gott etwas wissen.⁶³

Anthropology

It may very well be that all the inconsistencies found in Paul Ernst's theoretical writings are purely of a formal nature, due to the inadequacies of language and logic. Hermann Mährlen⁶⁴ has pointed this out and explained their presence from the very peculiar mixture of poetry and exactness in Paul Ernst's "Versuche einer liebhabermäsigen Darstellung." For that very reason, however, it is more dangerous to quote from Paul Ernst than from other men who write a simple and direct prose style; and for that reason, too, misinterpretations will be frequent.

It is probably such a misinterpretation when the same author (Mährlen) says of Paul Ernst's

⁶¹ Credo, p. 257.

⁶² E. G., p. 328.

⁶³ Credo, p. 257.

⁶⁴ Mährlen, Gesellschaft und Kunst in Paul Ernst's Denken, dissertation, Gieszen, 1937, p. 5.

philosophy that it is anthropocentric:

Der Mensch mit seinen vielseitigen Beziehungen, in seiner Stellung zwischen der diesseitigen Welt und einer jenseitigen steht im Mittelpunkt.⁶⁵

At least, Paul Ernst himself flatly contradicts him; --and here we can perhaps take him at his word, literally.

Es zeigt sich, dasz ... Verzweiflung entsteht, wenn man den Menschen als Mittelpunkt der Welt faszt. Aber er steht in Wirklichkeit an der Peripherie, und im Mittelpunkt steht Gott.⁶⁶

Since the days of humanism and the enlightenment, man had occupied the center of the stage, metaphysically speaking. With Paul Ernst, he resumes his place among an infinity of creations. For that reason it is that Ernst, who has so much to say on so many subjects, has nothing at all to say on the otherwise important questions of "Whence?" and "Whither?" Though he lets it be known that he has no use for the Darwinian theory of evolution, he does not indulge in any speculations on creationism. Nor is he much concerned with immortality and any hereafter. About such things, he says, we can never hope to know anything and, therefore, had better not waste our energy in speculating about them.

Die Menschheit (ist) ein Wald, der nach den Zwecken und Absichten Gottes bewirtschaftet wird, von denen der Wald nie selber Etwas wissen kann.⁶⁷

* * *

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶⁶ Credo, p. 35.

⁶⁷ Grundlagen, p. 559.

Determinism

The natural correlative of such an anthropology is a doctrine of determinism which, for practical effects, amounts to nothing less than out and out fatalism⁶⁸ or, in religion, predestination. Three observations helped to convince Paul Ernst of its correctness: the degree to which the individual is limited by society, especially in a very complex and complicated society; the uncontrollability of international affairs, e.g., the coming of the World War in spite of the fact that no one wanted it to come; and the manner in which he himself came to realize his destiny as a poet almost against his will.

He teaches the doctrine in many different connections. Perhaps the most pointed expression is the line: "Ich lebte nicht, ich wurde gelebt."⁶⁹ Another very clear formulation occurs in one of the Erdachte Gespräche, The souls of Dostojewsky and Schiller have recognized one another in the here-after.

Dostojewsky: ... Was habe ich getan, dasz ich ewig in einem Sumpf stehen musz?

Schiller: Gottes Gnade hat für uns gewählt.⁷⁰

Two important problems are immediately linked up with this doctrine, namely the problems of human freedom and of personal responsibility. Paul Ernst recognizes both, and he understands very well the apparent contradiction implied when he asserts such freedom and such responsibility while maintaining a deterministic or fatalistic attitude. But, as

⁶⁸ G. Watts Gunningham, in his Problems of Philosophy, New York, 1926, gives these definitions on page 391: "The determinist maintains ... that the agent's will is always determined in the moment of willing, not by wholly external forces, as the fatalist claims, but by the tendencies, the impulses and purposes that belong to the agent's character."

⁶⁹ Jünger., p. 311.

⁷⁰ E. G., p. 319.

he does so often, he argues the difficulties away by assuming that they are merely due to a too logical, or over-simplified process of reasoning.

Das ist ein Widerspruch, der ... dadurch entsteht, dasz wir denselben Vorgang von zwei verschiedenen Ebenen aus betrachten. Wir können sagen: Von uns aus betrachtet, geschehen unsere Handlungen frei, von Gott aus betrachtet, geschehen sie unfrei...⁷¹ Der dieses sagt, ist ein Dichter, der sein ganzes Leben lang sich bemüht hat, die Gesetze des menschlichen Handelns zu erkennen. Nun, er hat als Ergebnis gefunden, dasz das menschliche Handeln nur dadurch vom tierischen unterschieden ist, dasz es mit dem Bewusstsein der Willensfreiheit vor sich geht. Mit diesem aber ordnet es sich genau so in das allgemeine Ineinandergreifen der Welt ein, wie das Instinktleben der Tiere."⁷²

Thus: "Ich bin frei UND bin in Gottes Hand."⁷³ But, "Es gibt ... ein Anpassen der Menschen an ihre übermenschlichen, gottgewollten Ziele."⁷⁴ Hence there are great differences among men. Their value, as characters, is directly proportional to the degree to which they feel themselves free despite their limitations, and the degree, too, to which they feel responsible for their actions in spite of the fact that they know themselves to be only tools in a master's hand.

Die Freiheit ist ein Gefühl, das die Handlung begleitet, das um so stärker ist, je höher seelisch das handelnde Wesen steht.⁷⁵

⁷¹Credo, p. 267.

⁷²Ibid., pp. 266/67

⁷³Dramen, iii, p. 33.

⁷⁴Grundlagen, p. 580.

⁷⁵Grundlagen, p. 22.

Von uns aus betrachtet sind wir für jede unserer Handlungen verantwortlich...(und)... je bedeutender ein Mensch ist, desto umfassender ist sein Verantwortlichkeitsgefühl.⁷⁶

This is, of course, old Christian doctrine. Paul Ernst can also put it into Christian terminology. In the imaginary conversation already mentioned he has Schiller say:

... Wie? Du meinst, Jesus Christus habe den Menschen die Freiheit bringen wollen? ... Christus wollte den Menschen nicht die Freiheit bringen--was ist das? Das ist ein Wort, das Wenige verstehen; er brachte ihnen den Glauben.⁷⁷

The whole matter is comprehensively summed up in a quotation from a poem, entitled, "Der Tod." Determinism, freedom, and responsibility are treated there in the same connection.

Bei der Geburt der Tod die Lebenstage
Genau dem Menschen zugemessen hat.
Dein Leben geht in Fröhlichkeit und Plage
Genau zu seiner vorbestimmten Statt.

... ..
Was fürchtest du den Tod! Er ist notwendig
Wie Durst und Hunger pünktlich unabwendig.
Doch nur der Weg ist unfrei und die Ziele,
Doch frei der Mensch, der auf dem Wege geht.

... ..
Im Tode fragst dich Gott, du stehst mit Bangen.
"Nicht welchen Weg; wie bist den Weg gegangen?"⁷⁸

* * *

⁷⁶Credo, p. 267.

⁷⁷E. G., p. 327.

⁷⁸Beten und Arbeiten, p. 73.

Good and Evil

This doctrine of determinism would have been much more popular during the history of human thought than it has been, except for one difficulty: it makes God responsible for all the evil in the world as well as for all the good. Especially religious leaders discarded it very often for just this reason.

Nur seltene starke Denker im Christentum hatten den Mut, von Vorbestimmung und ewiger Verwerfung zu sprechen. Heute dürfen wir uns der Wahrheit nicht mehr verschließen.⁷⁹

Not only does Paul Ernst not hesitate to draw these necessary conclusions, he glories in them. Christianity, he contends, might have remained the aristocratic religion it originally was if it had not been for the aforementioned lack of courage on the part of its historic leaders. And Schiller, he thinks, might have penetrated to the exalted tragedy it was his mission to find, if he had possessed just a little more daring to follow out an idea which, on one occasion, he actually expressed.⁸⁰

For himself, Paul Ernst is very outspoken. He regards sin not as an unfortunate accident, nor yet as an interference with the plans of God, but as a necessity and an integral part of this plan. He even goes so far as to advise certain individuals to pray that God might let them fall into great sins. Since this matter will have to be discussed more fully in a later chapter, it will perhaps suffice to list four brief quotations at this time. Two are in prose, and two from dramas.

Der Mensch ist frei von sich aus, von Gott
aus ist er unfrei. Gott hat gewählt für ihn
bei seiner Geburt, welchen Weg er gehen soll:
den Weg des Guten, der zu Heiterkeit und

⁷⁹Grundlagen, p. 61.

⁸⁰Cf. the review of Paul Ernst's critique of Schiller in the next paragraph.

Freiheit führt, oder den Weg des Schlechten,
 der zu Qual, Lüge und Aufgeregtheit geht
 ...⁸¹ Beide sind in Gott, der Gute wie der
 Schlechte; beide werden von Gott getrieben
 und müssen Gottes Zwecke erfüllen; ist da
 für Gott denn ein Unterschied? Beide sind
 ihm nötig.⁸²

Der Jüngling: Wie, wenn ein Guter, weil er
 Gutes, will,
 Vernichtet wird durch blinden Unverstand,
 Das wäre göttliches Gericht?--

Der Greis: Du kennst
 Der Götter Wege bei den Menschen nicht;
 Das Böse ist notwendig wie das Gute,

 Sie sehen alles im Zusammenhang.⁸³

Ariadne: Ja, er tat, was recht.
 Wie jammervoll ist doch: er tat, was recht.
 Ich tat, was unrecht ist, und ich bin mehr.⁸⁴

Ethics

That Paul Ernst cannot have a universal
 ethics, binding alike upon all, would seem to follow
 easily from such quotations.

Der Grundirrtum jeder imperativistischen
 Moral ist die Vorstellung, dasz eine für alle
 Menschen gültige Ethik möglich sei.⁸⁵

Instead, he distinguishes between three classes of
 human beings, "... die sinnliche grosse Masse, ...
 die Berufenen und die Auserwählten."⁸⁶ For those at
 one extreme he has a "Sklavenmoral," and for those at

⁸¹ Credo, p. 269.

⁸² Ibid., p. 268.

⁸³ Dramen, ii, pp. 397/98.

⁸⁴ Ibid., ii, p. 395.

⁸⁵ Credo, p. 211.

⁸⁶ Tagebuch, p. 270.

the other, a "Herrenmoral," like Nietzsche, of whom he says:

Nietzsches Unterscheidung von Herren- und Sklavenmoral ist ein Gedanke des allerersten Ranges, durch den unendlich viel erhellt wird.⁸⁷

Two characteristics, especially, mark off the one from the other. The "Herrenmoral" must not impose duties, and it must postulate no connection between goodness and resultant happiness. Duty is a middle-class concept throughout, useful for restraining the masses, but contemptible if applied to a great soul. Happiness, likewise, is a goal only for "Bürger" and "Philister." Higher individuals ask for suffering instead and for a chance to grow in the inner man.

Paul Ernst's position with respect to Kant is, of course, evident at a glance. The two are diametrically opposed in their ethical views. Moreover, Paul Ernst believes that the Kantian ethic has contributed more than any one other cause to the collapse of German idealism, the failure of the German classical period to achieve its destiny, and the defeat of Germany in the World War. It has been and is the root of all evil. Consequently he regards it as one of the outstanding tasks of his life to argue against it.

Die Mittelmäßigkeit ... offenbart uns ..., dasz Kant ein tief unsittlicher Denker ist. Er ist tief unsittlich, wie jeder Denker das sein musz, der sich nicht zu der Höhe der Religion erheben kann, auf welcher der Tragiker steht....⁸⁸

An unwarranted identification of Schiller's ethics with the ethics of Kant has misled Paul Ernst

⁸⁷Credo, p. 211.

⁸⁸Z.d.d.I., p. 17.

into those errors concerning Schiller which are now to be discussed. Just one more quotation to point the issue once again, and to show how the intensity of Paul Ernst's feelings in the matter led him even to use biting sarcasm: It is taken from an imaginary conversation, entitled, "Religion und Moral."

Die Mutter: ... Gehen Sie mit Ihrem Gesetz, das ist eine Einrichtung für Kaufleute.

Kant: Sie meinen für Kaufleute?

Die Mutter: Für den gerechten Kaufmann sind alle Menschen gleich, den Reichen lässt er nicht mehr bezahlen und auch nicht weniger wie den Armen. Gott aber ist ein ungerechter Kaufmann, oft fordert er dem Reichen mehr ab, oft weniger wie dem Armen, und niemals ist ein Mensch gleich vor ihm. Das aber ist das Grosze, dasz Gott kein gerechter Kaufmann ist.⁸⁹

Sociology

Such ethics call for an aristocratically controlled society. Those born to serve should serve, and those born to lead should lead.

Der Mann, den Gott zum Knecht gewollt, ist Knecht;
Sorge für ihn, behandle ihn gerecht,
Doch lasz ihn bleiben, was er ist, und wähle
Zum Herrn den Mann mit einer Herrenseele.⁹⁰

Thus two results would be achieved: greater happiness for those who crave happiness and a perfect chance at self-expression, self-development and self-discipline for the others.--The theory of human equality is nonsense. The fact is that men are not born equal. Democracy, therefore, is a form of

⁸⁹ E. G., p. 53.

⁹⁰ Jahrbuch der Paul Ernst Gesellschaft, 1936, p. 19.

government based upon a false assumption. It can only bring disastrous results. On that score it becomes evident that Paul Ernst would agree perfectly with the American thinker, George Santayana, who writes:

There is no tyranny so hateful as a vulgar and anonymous tyranny.... It blasts every budding novelty and sprig of genius with its omnipresent and fierce stupidity. Such a headless people has the mind of a worm and the claws of a dragon.⁹¹

On the other hand,

Eine Gesellschaftsordnung, in welcher die Leitung in der Hand eines Verbandes der Menschen von höherer Sittlichkeit liegt, ist nun offenbar aber eine natürliche Ordnung.⁹²

Thoughts of this kind are frequently expressed and emphasized in the Kaiserbuch which was written during the decade after the war when Germany was governed by a Republican parliament.

This entire work in fact strikes one as an ambitious attempt on the poet's part to persuade and convert his people to a new political philosophy in keeping, it is true, with the glorious traditions of a mighty past.

Religion

Paul Ernst's religion is just as aristocratic.

Man benimmt sich im allgemeinen so, als ob jedermann im ganzen Volk religiös sei oder religiös sein könne. Dadurch geschieht viel

⁹¹ George Santayana, Life of Reason, New York, 1928, II, pp. 127/28.

⁹² Tagebuch, p. 189.

Unglück.⁹³--Absolute Religion (kann) nur
Erlebnis seltener Ausnahmenaturen sein.⁹⁴

But for these exceptional people religion is a part
of their very life.

Religion (ist) innige Verbindung mit dem
Ewigen.⁹⁵--Der höherstehende Mensch musz
immer sein Leben mit dem Ewigen verbinden.⁹⁶
Vielleicht kann man sagen, dasz der Glaube
ein Gewinn unseres Lebens sein musz.⁹⁷--Er
ist die Verbindung mit Gott, vom Menschen
aus gesehen, wie es die Gnade ist, von Gott
aus gesehen.⁹⁸

Christianity, he thinks, has been badly
adulterated because its myths were preached as his-
torical facts. For the myths Paul Ernst has the
highest possible regard and he believes that Chris-
tianity is, taken all in all, the best of all re-
ligions so far.

Ich halte das Christentum für die höchste
Religion.⁹⁹--Jede Art von Menschen versteht
einen anderen Gott; wir deutschen Europäer
aber, wir Nachkommen der alten Griechen, sind
die höchsten Menschen und haben den höchsten
Gott, neben dem alle anderen Götter nichtig
sind.¹⁰⁰

The most profound of all religious insights,
according to Paul Ernst, is contained in the symbolism

⁹³ Ibid., p. 280.

⁹⁴ Credo, p. 198.

⁹⁵ Tagebuch, p. 280.

⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 281.

⁹⁷ Loc. cit., p. 281.

⁹⁸ Credo, p. 265.

⁹⁹ Grundlagen, p. 40.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 28.

of the Son of God's martyrdom on the cross. It is the supreme exaltation of the character-building faculty of suffering, and it represents the highest achievement toward man's ultimate union with the deity. This symbol, and others like it, make Christianity an ideal religion, inasmuch as everyone can take out of it as much as his inner man can make use of. And, after all, religion is never a matter of intellectual convictions, but of feelings. Schleiermacher himself might have written such lines as these:

Durch zwei Bestandteile wird die Religion gewöhnlich ziemlich von Anbeginn an verfälscht: durch gedankliche Inhalte und durch die natürliche Selbstsucht des Menschen. Religion ist ein Gefühl.¹⁰¹

Yet, despite its highly personal character, it is also a "Massengefühl"¹⁰² and a "Gemeinschafts-sache."¹⁰³ Wherever, therefore, things seem to be in a state of disintegration, religion, and more of it, is the remedy. Paul Ernst believes that he has witnessed the beginnings of a general return to it.¹⁰⁴

* * *

In discussing anthropology it was said that Paul Ernst is not much interested in researches into human origins. Neither is he much concerned with speculations on human destinies in a beyond. The query, "Whither?" has just as little practical value for him as the other one which asks, "Whence?" He is, above all, a practical man.

He does not believe in a resurrection nor does he believe in a migration of souls, though a

¹⁰¹ Tagebuch, p. 292.

¹⁰² Credo, p. 223.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 300.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 257.

student of Buddhism as well as Confucianism.¹⁰⁵ His problems are solved with an insight into the tragic nature of our present personal existence.

Die christliche Religion gibt die einzige Lösung für die Fragen, welche uns bewegen, indem sie den tragischen Charakter des bewussten Lebens darstellt. Unser bewusstes Leben ist ein kleiner Teil des allgemeinen Lebens, das uns ewig unerkennbar sein wird. Nur in diesem allgemeinen Leben lösen sich die Widersprüche unseres persönlichen, einzelnen Lebens. Diese Lösung wird uns also nie zugänglich. Aber wir leben nun einmal bewusst und vereinzelt, müssen in diesem Leben unsere Fragen stellen: es ist nicht anders möglich, als dasz wir einsehen, dasz dieses Einzelleben tragisch ist. Haben wir das eingesehen, so können wir es auch ertragen.¹⁰⁶

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 244.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 299-300.

Part Two

PAUL ERNST AS A CRITIC OF SCHILLER

The philosophical system thus outlined is much more comprehensive and also much more specific in detail than any system of thought which could be derived from the works of Schiller. This may possibly be so partly because Paul Ernst made a conscious attempt to help in a reorganization of social life, and partly because he wrote voluminously in a prose style so clear that it leaves little room for speculative interpretation, whereas Schiller did not aim at completeness in his philosophical writings and expressed many of his leading ideas only in his dramatic compositions where the interpretation of them quite naturally remains somewhat hazardous.

Paul Ernst's start in life had been very similar to Schiller's, as we have seen. Moreover he had been constantly preoccupied with the works of Schiller. For these reasons one might have expected him to become an apologist and apostle of the older man.

But then a number of profound experiences caused him to discard all his earlier convictions and to start out again from entirely different premises. Schiller had been predominantly an intellectualist. Paul Ernst came to be emotionally controlled. Schiller had been a theorist. Paul Ernst was, above all, a practical man. All his writings are teleological rather than merely logical. Schiller was a son of the "Aufklärung." Paul Ernst became a mystic.

Yet the chief interests and tendencies of the two men remained identical. Paul Ernst continued to

regard ethics as the most important branch of philosophy and continued to insist upon a transcendental system of values and a metaphysical orientation which was essentially religious in character. His almost complete agreement with Schiller in matters of esthetics has its roots in this community of interests and tendencies.

It is so much the more, then, a matter of surprise to find that Paul Ernst, of all men, should have written a violent and, in part, badly mistaken, criticism of Schiller's ethics! This criticism, as was stated in the introduction, is contained, for the most part, in a volume entitled Der Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus, both in the introduction, and in a particular essay entitled "Don Carlos."

It is important to remember this connection in arriving at an appraisal of Paul Ernst's opinions. It shows that Paul Ernst did not write his critique of Schiller for its own sake. He wrote it as a part of a much larger critique of the whole classical period of German literature. And he wrote it in an attempt to prove a theory--a theory, moreover, the argument toward which he later failed to complete.

What Paul Ernst has to say in opposition to Schiller's ethics may, therefore, very easily be regarded as having been inspired by ulterior motives. It may be considered also as possibly mistaken. The suspicion, at least, cannot be avoided that he failed to finish the entire argument of which his critique of Schiller was a part simply because he came to see that the theory on which he had worked was a mistaken one. Be that as it may, an acquaintance with the whole of this theory is essential to an evaluation of any of its supporting arguments.--Perhaps it is also important to know that the volume under consideration was written during the winter of 1916-17.

The general theme is expressed in the introductory paragraphs:

Die heutigen Völker haben die Erbschaft
des Altertums angetreten, aber des

verfallenden Altertums. So kamen sie nur sehr selten dazu, eigene Formen zu schaffen, und eines nach dem andern sind diese Völker deshalb abgestorben, fast ohne der Menschheit etwas zu hinterlassen. Die heutigen Deutschen haben sich am freiesten von der verhängnisvollen Erbschaft gehalten; aber auch bei ihnen haben sich keine selbständigen Formen entwickelt: und hierin liegt die Ursache des Zusammenbruchs unseres klassischen Idealismus.

Wenn die Völker keine schöpferischen Aufgaben mehr haben, dann werden sie gedankenlos, genussüchtig und gemein. Seit jenem Zusammenbruch sind wir sehr weit auf dem Wege der Gemeinheit fortgeschritten. Aber hoffentlich wird dieser Krieg ein so groszes Unglück für uns, dasz wir uns wieder besinnen, und vielleicht sind wir noch so jung, dasz wir unsere Geschichte wieder ganz von vorn anfangen können.¹

When a third edition of the volume with this introduction became necessary in 1931, its author had become quite pessimistic about the future. At least he no longer expected essential improvement merely from the succession of another generation. Withdrawing an original dedication of the book to the youth of his people, he said at that time: "Ich habe heute auch den Glauben an die Jugend verloren."² But at the time of the composition of the book, he had had much hope for a new and better future, provided the real roots of the debacle could be laid bare. Georg Noth, a close friend of Ernst's and the man who pronounced the benediction over the poet's grave, has written this fine appreciation of his "Kulturkritik:"

¹Z.d.d.I., p. 10.

²Ibid., dedication.

Man muss mit dem Dichter einen Blick getan haben in den sinnlosen Weltzustand, welcher sich seit dem Ende des vorigen Jahrhunderts bei allen Völkern der europäischen Zivilisation entwickelt hat, um einzusehen, dass Paul Ernst da einsetzt, wo Spenglers Untergangstheorie relativ Recht, zutiefst aber Unrecht hat.³

1. Criticisms.

Don Carlos, so the main thesis runs, is by far Schiller's best work. As a dramatist he degenerated rapidly from that time on, this degeneration being due chiefly to an adulteration of his thinking caused by the study of Kant.

Paul Ernst begins by sketching the situation, so far as the German drama was concerned, at the time when Schiller wrote his first play. He says that Schiller was influenced by Goethe and, later, by Lessing; and then he makes this statement:

Aber als er die Räuber schrieb, unterschied er sich in zwei wesentlichen Dingen von dem Dichter des Götz: er besaß ein bühnenmässiges Temperament, und er hatte eine tragische Idee erlebt.⁴

Two advantages, then, are in Schiller's favor from the beginning of his career: a natural aptitude to write for the stage, and an experience which enabled him to appreciate the essence of tragedy. Both are deemed essential, but both have serious flaws. The natural aptitude was weakened by his education, and the tragic experience remained limited to that of one single idea, freedom.

Regarding the nearly fatal influence of Schiller's education, Paul Ernst says:

³Georg Noth, "'Der Heiland' von Paul Ernst," Die Neue Literatur, xxxviii, no. 6 (Juni 1937), pp. 269/324.

⁴Z.d.d.L., p. 232.

Schiller ist trotz seiner Erziehung ein Dichter geworden. Der Versuch (i.e., aus der göttlichen Idee, die sich in ihm gestalten wollte, etwas Anderes zu machen) ist misglückt. Aber er hat sehr viel in dem Kampf gelassen. Friedrich Schlegel sagt einmal von ihm, er habe eine von Haus aus verdorbene Phantasie. Das ist richtig: und es ist nicht genug zu bewundern, wie ein Mann hat ein groszer Dichter werden können, obwohl das Hauptwerkzeug des Dichters ihm verdorben war.⁵

This same education had, however, created the one valuable tragic experience.

In dem inneren Ringen der göttlichen Idee gegen den sinnlosen menschlichen Zwang bildete sich Schillers Freiheitsgefühl, das Gefühl für die Würde und Unverletzbarkeit des Letzten, Innersten in uns.⁶

In Schiller's Räuber, Paul Ernst finds this experience expressed. He finds it again in Don Carlos, especially in Posa's enthusiastic and idealistic pleas. But Schiller's later productions do not seem to him to contain it.

Schiller wurde nach den Räubern sofort in das Schriftstellerleben geworfen, in ein Leben, das für den Dichter das allerungünstigste ist ... Es bestand die Gefahr, dass er sein groszes Erlebnis für den Erwerb ausnützte, statt es zu vertiefen.⁷

In progressing from Karl Moor, through Posa and Philipp, to the grandinquisitor, Schiller had, moreover, by degrees, come to see the inherent

⁵Ibid., p. 234.

⁶Loc. cit.

⁷Ibid., p. 235.

similarity between the revolutionary and the tyrant and had, by stages, developed a concept of duty which permitted of no further development.

In Karl Moor ist noch nichts von Pflicht, ist alles nur noch Rausch des revolutionären Triebes; in Posa, der schon ein Staatsmann ist, wiegt schon die Pflicht den Rausch auf; in Philipp, dem König, ist nur noch die letzte menschliche Schwäche zurückgeblieben neben der Pflicht; im Groszinquisitor ist auch die verschwunden.⁸

In any case,

Schillers Erlebnis war erschöpft ... Aber damit hatte er den Boden verloren, aus dem die dichterischen Früchte wuchsen.⁹

Paul Ernst then proceeds to describe how Schiller felt the need of a new experience himself, how he sought to find it in Kant's philosophy, how, for a while, he thought he had found it there, only to become bitterly disappointed later. He says that Schiller never realized the reason for this inevitable disappointment, and then he goes into an analysis of the Kantian system to show why it not only could not have given Schiller the new experience he needed and was seeking but why it was actually bound to foredoom his best efforts to failure.

Long quotations below will trace the development of Paul Ernst's ideas in this matter. Here we must pause to adduce a number of pronouncements to show just how highly he regarded Schiller's accomplishments up to this time and also what he, Paul Ernst, would have done to avoid the weaknesses of the plot as it stands. In praise of the excellencies of Don Carlos, we may quote Paul Ernst's characterization

⁸Ibid., p. 252.

⁹Ibid., p. 253.

of it as "das erste Auftauchen der groszen Tragödie." ¹⁰ He writes,

Schiller hat nie wieder die groszen Gestalten erreicht, die er im Carlos hatte, ... Gestalten, die der groszen Tragödie würdig sind, die neben die Gestalten des Sophokles gestellt werden dürfen, ohne dasz der Dichter beschämt würde,¹²⁵

Again he asserts:

Philipp ist wahrhaft königlich. Wenigstens in unserer deutschen Dichtung haben wir keinen Ähnlich königlichen Charakter. In dem groszen Auftritt zwischen ihm und Carlos im zweiten Aufzug, einem der erhabensten Auftritte die wir in der deutschen Dichtung haben, kommt die furchtbare Tragik gewaltig heraus.¹²

But Paul Ernst goes further. Not only does Schiller's work appeal to him as so very excellent in many portions, it contains germs of unfathomable potentialities.

Das Erschütterndste aber ist vielleicht, dasz Schiller seinen Posa schon so weit hatte gelangen lassen dürfen, dasz das neue Erlebnis hätten kommen können. In der groszen Szene zwischen Philipp und Posa ... stand Schiller im Torweg zur Religion und groszen Tragödie.¹³

Much the same idea is later again expressed in one of the Erdachte Gespräche. There the spirit of poets says:

¹⁰Ibid., p. 245.

¹¹Ibid., p. 246.

¹²Ibid., p. 239.

¹³Ibid., pp. 254/55.

Ich habe mich damals, als noch Geist in der Welt war, in Deutschland in einigen Dichtern verkörpert. Als Schiller kam ich an die Grenze meines Erlebens und suchte nun bei Kant den Weg über diese Grenze. Ich habe gefühlt, dass Kant nur ein Bürger war. Aber nun war ich verlassen von jedem Führer. Ich war als Schiller ein Mensch von Gottes Gnaden, ich hätte zu Gott kommen müssen; ich kam nur bis zum Schönen, nur bis zum Vorhof Gottes.¹⁴

Don Carlos, then, stands characterized as the closest approach in modern times to real tragedy. That it failed to become so actually is due to the fact that Schiller did not perceive the tragic elements of the plot very clearly. Paul Ernst would have broken it up into two dramas. The one would have been entitled, "Philipp" and the other, "Posa." Philipp would have been placed under the necessity of distrusting his son and thus of being confronted with a tragic choice between the duties of fatherhood and those of a king. Posa would have become the typical reformer who later finds himself compelled to be just as cruel and inconsiderate in one way, as the tyrant against whom he revolted, had been in another. The second of these two tragedies would have to be developed, of course, but of the first of them, Paul Ernst says:

Die Tragödie, wie sie hier im Umriss gegeben ist, und welche etwa fünfzehnhundert Verse umfassen würde, steckt teilweise wörtlich in dem Schillerschen Werk; sie konnte aber nicht herauskommen, weil der Dichter nicht aus dem Bann des Familiengemäldes herauskam."¹⁵

¹⁴Ibid., p. 314.

¹⁵Z.d.d.I., p. 242.

After these necessary digressions we come back to Paul Ernst's reasons for considering Schiller's discipleship of Kant as absolutely and inevitably fatal to his own development. He distinguishes four main ideas in Kant's philosophy: the three postulates of God, freedom and immortality; and the moral law. One of these, freedom, Schiller had already experienced and developed into tragedy. The other three are barren, without exception, of tragic possibilities.

The last named of them, the moral law, suffers from the fatal weakness that it is not formal only but material as well. It prescribes a certain code of conduct instead of merely enunciating a detached theoretical principle, "... wie ja Kant überhaupt ein heimlicher Dogmatiker ist." ¹⁶ Kant says that one should act always so that one could wish the maxim of one's actions to become universal law. This very demand of potential generality, Paul Ernst then goes on to maintain, makes the Kantian formula strictly middle-class and conformist. It could, therefore, never apply to the higher type of individual. Such a principle, for instance, as that of the highest possible self-development would immediately be ruled out by Kant. He knows only duties; and duties, says Paul Ernst, are only for the common run of men.

Für den menschlichen Durchschnitt gilt
das Gesetz, dasz er sich musz verbrauchen
lassen, wie er nun einmal ist.¹⁷

The higher type of individual must be free from them.

Etwa die Pflicht gegen die Familie, die
für den Schuster etwas Heiliges ist, wäre
für einen Schiller eine Niederträchtigkeit;
und wenn der Schuster von einer 'Pflicht

¹⁶E.G., p. 297.

¹⁷Z.d.d.I., p. 269.

gegen sich selbst' sprechen wollte, wie man wohl volkstümlich den Trieb des groszen Mannes bezeichnet, so wäre das eine Ueberhebung und Unverschämtheit.¹⁸

And it is only the extraordinary man who is a fit subject for tragedy.

Das Kantische Sittengesetz ist Nichts als der Ausdruck für eine Lebensbedingung der mittleren bürgerlichen Gesellschaft. Es bewegt sich auf der Fläche der blossen Achtbarkeit. Das grosze Drama aber hat es mit anderen sittlichen Aufgaben zu tun, als mit der Aufrechterhaltung der bürgerlichen Achtbarkeit.¹⁹

Parenthetically, Paul Ernst offers a second thoroughgoing criticism of Kant's ethics, not based upon his own "Herrenmoral." He says that it is psychologically unsound inasmuch as it assumes that our actions are the result of our conscious reflections which, in fact, do not occur until much later, in the form of rationalizations after the fact, the act having really been prompted by entirely different factors.

Die Ursachen der Handlungen (liegen) in Tiefen ..., wo von "Motiven" überhaupt nicht mehr die Rede sein kann.²⁰

For that reason:

Ein Dichter, der die Handlungen seiner Gestalten nur durch die Beweggründe erklärte, die sie selber zu haben glauben, wäre ein schlechter Dichter.²¹

¹⁸Ibid., pp. 269/70.

¹⁹Ibid., p. 270.

²⁰E. G., p. 412.

²¹Z.d.d.I., p. 270.

The remaining postulates of the Kantian system, immortality and God, seem to Paul Ernst to serve no other purpose than to support such a middle-class morality. Because he has no use for the one, he does not need the other. The demand for immortality, he says, results from the prior demand for happiness, as a result of obedience to the ethical code. And this demand, again, he characterizes as strictly middle-class. He himself asks for suffering:

Das Leiden ist nicht etwa eine unerwünschte Begleiterscheinung ...; sondern es ist eine Ursache für die Hoheit der Seele, und deshalb wird es von allen groszen Lehrern der Menschheit bejaht, deshalb hat auch die christliche Religion aus dem Gott am Kreuz ihr höchstes Symbol gemacht.²²

More than that:

Eine Seele ist desto leidensfähiger, je höher sie steht, und sie steht desto höher, je leidensfähiger sie ist.²³

Instead of seeking happiness in another world, Paul Ernst subscribes to Goethe's confession of faith, "Wer immer strebend sich bemüht, den können wir erlösen," disdains death as "nur ein zufälliges Versagen irgendwelcher gleichgültigen Zellen," and²⁴ concludes of Kant's immortality: "Eine solche Unsterblichkeit kann ein Dichter nicht gebrauchen"²⁵ and of Kant's God:

Mit dem Gott Kants kann die grosze Dichtung Nichts anfangen; die grosze Dichtung kann einen gerechten Gott nicht gebrauchen, sie braucht einen ungerechten Gott. Es handelt sich bei

²²Ibid., 271.

²³Loc. cit.

²⁴Ibid., p. 272.

²⁵Loc. cit.

ihr um Höheres, als um Belohnung der Tugend und Bestrafung des Lasters.²⁶

Summing up his conclusions, he says:

Wenn wir nun alles zusammennehmen, so hat Schiller Nichts von Kant bekommen können.²⁷

That in itself, of course, would not have been so unfortunate, Ernst continues, but not only did Schiller not derive any benefit from Kant, not only did he waste many precious years of his life in studying his philosophy, but he actually permitted himself to become hopelessly confused in his originally very sound ethical orientation.

Denken wir an Tell. Der Tyrann befiehlt, dasz der Vater den Apfel auf dem Haupt des Sohnes durchschieszen soll, und der Vater zielt nicht auf das Herz des Tyrannen, sondern auf den Apfel. Dem Schiller bis zum Don Carlos wäre eine solche bürgerliche Feigheit nicht möglich gewesen. Der unglückliche Mörder Johann fleht Tell um Obdach an, und der selbstgerechte, nun ja, der selbstgerechte Philister stöszt ihn von sich. Der junge Schiller hätte eine solche bürgerliche Gemeinheit nicht gedichtet.²⁸

This is strong language, but there are other judgments of like nature. Paul Ernst calls Tell "ein Volksstück," Braut von Messina, in spite of some superlative praise for some of the verses spoken by the chorus, "als Ganzes abscheulich," and he agrees with Hebbel that Die Jungfrau von Orleans should have been renamed a "Theaterjungfrau." Maria Stuart has for its heroine "eine einfach schlechte

²⁶Ibid., p. 271.

²⁷Ibid., p. 272.

²⁸Ibid., pp. 270/71.

und mittelmässige Person," and Wallenstein has "keinen Gehalt." The latter play indeed has dramatic possibilities. Either the emperor or his general could have been made into a tragic hero, but Schiller did not see these possibilities.

Wie ist das möglich, dass Schiller das nicht gesehen hat? Diese Tragödie wäre die Darstellung eines Kampfes zwischen der menschlichen Freiheit und der äusseren Notwendigkeit geworden. Nun aber hat Schiller offenbar die Notwendigkeit nie erlebt. Eine andere Erklärung ist nicht möglich.²⁹

That, then, is, in brief, the gist of Paul Ernst's judgment and critique of Schiller. Quite naturally he concludes:

Unser groszer Dramatiker Schiller ist nicht 1805 gestorben, sondern 1782, als er den Carlos beendet hatte.³⁰

A better understanding of the ancients might have prevented this disaster. Schiller should have avoided and ignored the study of Kant and of Shakespeare! If only he could have been left alone! "Dieser Mensch in seinem dunklen Drange war sich des rechten Weges wohl bewusst," Paul Ernst might have quoted, before continuing:

Die Griechen hatten recht: der Dichter ist der Seher, der Genosse der Götter. Wehe ihm, wenn er sich von seiner Zeit irremachen lässt und das vergisst! Dass Schiller es vergessen hat, das ist eine furchtbare Schuld, die nicht nur an ihm, die an unserer ganzen Dichtung sich gerächt hat. Aber was ist

²⁹Ibid., p. 277.

³⁰Ibid., p. 282.

Schuld? ³¹ ... Schiller und Kant sind hier ja nicht zwei zufällige Menschen. In den beiden groszen Männern lag das Schicksal der deutschen klassischen Zeit. ³²

2. Corrections.

Ich habe in meinem Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus gezeigt, dasz die Dichtung unserer klassischen Zeit nicht lebendig aus dem Volksleben hervorwuchs, dasz sie das Ueberkommene nicht als blosze Anregung benutzte, sondern als Vorbild, dasz sie nicht klassisch war, sondern romantisch. ³³

It is not necessary to disagree with this statement of Paul Ernst's regarding the success of his general argumentation, contained mainly in the essay just reviewed, nor is it necessary to seek to refute his opinion that the romantic elements in German classical literature contributed essentially to the misdirection of energies which helped to bring on the World War and German defeat. But Paul Ernst errs in one detail concerning Schiller, and he contradicts himself. The error consists in his oft repeated charge that Schiller taught Kantian ethics and portrayed a Kantian God "dessen Aufgabe es ist, dasz der Moralische auch seinen gebührenden Lohn bekommt." ³⁴

As a matter of fact, Schiller did nothing of the sort! It is true that he believed in a moral world order, but he did not teach a connection between goodness and reward, nor between evil and punishment. A single quotation will be enough to show this because it is so utterly clear and to the point. In his essay Ueber das Erhabene, Schiller says:

³¹Ibid., p. 263.

³²Ibid., p. 272.

³³Jünger, p. 38.

³⁴Z.d.d.I., p. 255.

Also hinweg mit der falschverstandenen Schonung und dem schlaffen, verzärtelten Geschmack, der über das ernste Angesicht der Notwendigkeit einen Schleier wirft und, um sich bei den Sinnen in Gunst zu setzen, eine Harmonie zwischen dem Wohlsein und Wohlverhalten lügt (The emphasis is Schiller's!), wovon sich in der wirklichen Welt keine Spuren zeigen! Stirne gegen Stirn zeige sich uns das böse Verhängnis.³⁵

And lest that plain confession of Schiller's ethical faith be explained away or weakened by the possible claim that Schiller said one thing in his theoretical works and something else again in his dramas, we quote in refutation the words of H. A. Korff:

Nicht dahin möge man die sittliche Weltordnung Schillers miszverstehen, als ob durch ihre Macht die Bösen bestraft, die Guten aber belohnt werden müssten, sondern in der wohlbegründeten Ueberzeugung, dass durch Böses Böses ausgerichtet wird, und das Böseste gerade durch den unschuldigen Untergang des Guten ...³⁶

The strange contradiction charged to Paul Ernst above is just as easily proved as this error in interpreting Schiller's ethics. It concerns his judgment of Wallenstein, particularly with reference to the element of necessity contained, or not contained, therein. In the essay on Don Carlos, Paul Ernst expressly deprecates the Wallenstein trilogy in comparison to the earlier Don Carlos drama. "Der Dichter des Wallenstein," he writes there, "ist nun ein ganz anderer Dichter als der frühere Schiller."³⁷

³⁵Schillers Werke, ed. by L. Bellermann, VII, p. 248.

³⁶Geist der Goethezeit, II, p. 262.

³⁷Z.d.d.I., p. 275.

"Es ist ihm nicht klar," he adds, "dasz die grosze Tragödie, die er früher unbewusst gewollt hatte, gar nicht vergleichbar ist mit dem, was er jetzt will." ³⁸ Specifically, he charges: "Es fehlt dem geschichtlichen Schauspiel die Notwendigkeit." ³⁹

But four or five years earlier, in the first edition of Credo, he had said exactly the opposite:

Es fehlte (i.e., im Don Carlos!) die gedankliche Durcharbeitung (i.e., des neuen tragischen Problems). Diese geschah in dem langen Zwischenraum bis zum Wallenstein.... In diesem, seinem grössten Werk, hat er sofort mit starkem Griff die tragische Situation erfaßt, aus der sich alles ergibt: den notwendigen Kampf des Mannes, der die sittliche Macht hat ohne die materielle. Hier ist alles bis ins letzte hinein notwendig und Schicksal. ⁴⁰

But not only is Paul Ernst's criticism of Schiller incorrect in an important detail and wholly inconsistent with his own former judgments, it seems, also, to be based upon an essential misinterpretation of the whole of Schiller's development.

Nowhere does Paul Ernst show any appreciation of the fact that Schiller ever regretted his temporarily all but complete submission to the Kantian system, nor does he give Schiller credit for struggling to maintain his own intellectual independence over against Kant. Paul Ernst's whole thesis rests upon the assumption that, after Don Carlos, Schiller came under the sway of Kantian ideas, that he remained under them until the end, and that he never realized how his own native genius had been poisoned by this association.

³⁸Ibid., p. 276.

³⁹Ibid., p. 277.

⁴⁰Credo, (Erstausgabe, Berlin, 1912), vol. I, p. 148.

Yet, if anything has been definitely established by modern research concerning Schiller, it is this later struggle against Kantian ethics. The struggle may not have come to a conclusion. On that there is no agreement. But all recent contributors agree that there is an unmistakable vacillation in all his later works, which Paul Ernst never seems to have realized.

Be it said at once that Paul Ernst's failure to do this constitutes no particular charge against him as a perspicacious critic. Much "spade work" toward this newer interpretation of Schiller had not been done at the time Paul Ernst wrote his essay on Don Carlos. His failure is so very interesting only because it would seem that he, of all men, should have been the first to understand Schiller as several recent contributors understand him now.

In a later chapter, an attempt will be made to explain why Paul Ernst did not make these new discoveries about Schiller when the time and the opportunity to make them seemed to have arrived--just as Paul Ernst charges that Schiller did not progress toward real, and specifically German, tragedy when destiny had assigned that task to him. In another chapter, too, these more modern interpretations of Schiller, especially of the later Schiller, will be traced in detail. Here it is our purpose, first of all, to outline that general view of Schiller's spiritual development which, if it be considered correct, will support the present writer's theory that Schiller was much more the man after Paul Ernst's heart than Paul Ernst ever realized or even suspected.

This interpretation of Schiller is contained in a book published in 1927 by F. A. Hohenstein and entitled, Schiller: die Metaphysik seiner Tragödie.⁴¹ The theory is based upon a minimum of evidence. But it has this one great virtue: it accounts for all

⁴¹Published by Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, Weimar, 1927.

the duality found in Schiller by those modern writers whose contributions will later be reviewed and compared with Paul Ernst's critique, especially Jensen, Gumbel, and Deubel, and, in addition, it takes into account the high degree of spirituality which was so eminently a characteristic of Schiller's genius. It is Hohenstein's opinion that the influence of Schiller's intellectual studies have been much over-rated in most interpretations of his dramas. He believes, instead, that Schiller's tragedies are, one and all, a reflection, primarily, of his own life, his inner struggles, his approach, by degrees, to a comprehensive philosophy of life and a personal religion. And in this development of the inner Schiller, Hohenstein finds a sharp break during the course of his final illness while he was working on his Demetrius.

Up to that time--so runs Hohenstein's account --Schiller had time and again battled against fate by sheer will power. But all these battles had, so far, been wholly within himself because his fate, as he saw it at the time, consisted simply in the eternal choice between what he called "Sinnenglück" and "Seelenfrieden." In his final illness, however, struggling as he did, with his last desperate energy, to complete his Demetrius, Schiller suddenly discovered that still another fate is in store for man even after he has either conquered his sensuality by his moral purpose or developed his urges into a complete harmony in a "schöne Seele." This fate, now, is wholly external and brutal. It meets him in the form of a cruel death which, senselessly, comes to him just as he is about to complete his crowning work. For a moment Schiller wavers. Has he been wrong all his life? Is there no rhyme or reason in human existence, after all? But soon he catches himself again and, this time, to assert his agreement with the deity--even if all the designs of this deity be utterly opposed to all his former thinking! Always, hitherto, he had believed that man's way is upward, and upward only. Now he discovered that it may be downward as well, that the struggle toward God may have as its

legitimate counterpart a falling away from God--and that God's purposes are achieved just the same, in part in this very falling away. It is in this belief, according to Hohenstein, that Schiller creates a Demetrius who sinks from nobility into bestiality, a Boris who rises from bestiality into nobility, and in Romanow a resurrected and now victorious Max Piccolomini, who carries on without being torn by any remaining duality in his soul.

Hohenstein finds his evidence in the meaningful changes, over against earlier drafts, which Schiller had made in those fragments of the Demetrius manuscript which were found on his desk when he died. They cannot be reviewed here, partly because the important final part of Hohenstein's book, containing vital information, alone runs to 23 pages and partly because the full weight and value of Hohenstein's conclusions could not possibly be appreciated without a perusal of the 151 pages preceding this final part.

Cysarz, to be sure, refers to Hohenstein's main thesis as "Traumdeuterei" and a "Prognostikatz."⁴² It does not fit into his outline of Schiller as a superhuman hero. But he admits its possibility just the same. Apparently his only reason for rejecting it with such vehemence is the well-warranted conclusion that, if what Hohenstein claims really happened, " ... so wäre dies wohl das grösste Wunder in der Geschichte des deutschen Schrifttums." And that, of course, is no reason. For our purposes it is, furthermore, quite sufficient to have the theory acknowledged as possible. Where the evidence is not conclusive, the theories of all competent investigators deserve respectful attention and further investigation. Also, they permit elaborations. Hohenstein concluded:

Schillers letzte Tragödie ist eine bange
Frage an die Gottheit nach der Sinnlosigkeit

⁴²Cysarz: Schiller, p. 401.

dieses Lebens, die Christusfrage⁴³, auf die es für das irdische Ohr keine Antwort mehr gibt.... Schiller findet auch aus diesem Zwiespalt den Weg zur Freiheit! ... als Frucht einer letzten, äussersten Entwicklung, verzichtet Schiller auf die zentrale Stellung des Menschen im Kosmos--: der Mensch, das Individuum, auch der grösste, der höchste Mensch wird ihm zum Atom.... Durch diese Aufhebung des Ich ... findet er die schon verlorene Einheit mit der Gottheit zurück in der Gewisheit, dass das Göttliche an sich nicht vernichtet werden kann, wenn es auch scheinbar im Individuum untergeht ...: die Weltbetrachtung Schillers hat sich aus einer egozentrischen zu einer kosmischen entwickelt.⁴⁴

This is exactly what Paul Ernst had asked of Schiller! Had he been able to see what Hohenstein saw, he would have been compelled to change much of his criticism into unstinted praise; he would have been compelled to hail Schiller as his own spiritual ancestor in precisely that domain where he, Paul Ernst, imagined himself as most original and as having marked the greatest progress beyond Schiller! He still could have charged that Schiller did not consolidate his gains, that they came altogether too late in his life. He could never have accused Schiller of having failed in the search!

Referring to these lines of Posa's:

Sehen Sie sich um
In seiner herrlichen Natur! Auf Freiheit
Ist sie gegründet--und wie reich ist sie
Durch Freiheit! Er, der grosze Schöpfer, wirft
In einen Tropfen Tau den Wurm, und lässt

⁴³To wit: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

⁴⁴Op. cit., pp. 176/178.

Noch in den toten Räumen der Verwesung
Die Willkür sich ergötzen ...

... ..

Er, der Freiheit

Entzückende Erscheinung nicht zu stören,
Er lässt der Uebel grauenvolles Heer
In seinem Weltall lieber toben--ihn,
Den Künstler, wird man nicht gewahr, bescheiden
Verhüllt er sich in ewige Gesetze;
Die sieht der Freigeist, doch nicht ihn. Wozu
Ein Gott? sagt er. Die Welt ist sich genug.
Und keines Christen Andacht hat ihn mehr,
Als dieses Freigeists Lästerung gepriesen.⁴⁵

Paul Ernst had exclaimed: "Wie hoch steht doch dieser Gott über dem Gott Kants ... ! Hier stand Schiller im Torweg zur Religion und zur groszen Tragödie!" ⁴⁶ Paul Ernst did not see that Schiller lived to pass through this gate, as Hohenstein seems to have shown he did!

3. Explanations.

There are at least two good reasons why one should have expected Paul Ernst to come to conclusions similar to those of Hohenstein. One reason is to be found in the fact that Paul Ernst's development had been so very similar to Schiller's that Schiller's soul should have been an open book to him. He himself had progressed from a childlike religious faith through doubt and despair to the conception of an absolute God, a God beyond good and evil, and he had come to think of such a succession of views as an inevitable sequence. Without searching Schiller's works for evidence, he should have assumed, a similar metaphysical faith in the late Schiller, simply from an analogy between his own processes of thought and

⁴⁵Act iii, Scene 10.

⁴⁶Z.d.d.I., p. 255.

those of Schiller. Another reason for thinking it strange that Paul Ernst did not discover Schiller's belief in an a-moral world order--assuming that Hohenstein is right--is to be seen in the fact that Paul Ernst must have made a detailed study of the very play from the uncompleted manuscripts of which Hohenstein gets his proof. At the time when he wrote his own Demetrios, he certainly must have studied Schiller's great fragment, Demetrius.

Of course, there remains the possibility that Hohenstein wrote an eisegesis rather than an exegesis. In that case our argument that the spiritual kinship existing between Paul Ernst and Schiller was, in fact, much greater than Paul Ernst himself ever discovered and that his relationship to Schiller includes a case of mistaken identity, a case of fighting one's best friend without knowing it, might seem very weak.

But one of the two remaining problems would still call for much the same answer as the one we intend to offer now. To recapitulate: there are these things that must be explained about Paul Ernst's essay on Don Carlos: first, how was it possible for him to charge that Schiller connected reward with goodness and punishment with evil in spite of the fact that Schiller had expressly denied any such connections? And second, what caused the flagrant contradictions between earlier and later judgments as to the relative dramatic value of Wallenstein? It is the first of these two problems which would be solved "ipso facto," if what we intend to say about the larger question just above is correct.

We would, therefore, combine an explanation of Paul Ernst's failure to perceive Schiller's belief in an absolute deity with an explanation of Paul Ernst's error in ascribing to Schiller an ethic which the latter has emphatically repudiated by hazarding the following explanation.

In his childhood Paul Ernst had studied the Bible and Lutheran theology side by side with

Schiller's works. Being uncritical at that time, he must have identified Schiller's ethics with the ethics of his church.⁴⁷ This early, uncritical identification was so strong that it remained intact through life. Hence, when Paul Ernst, due to most violent experiences against which it had not guarded him, came to renounce the whole religious training of his childhood and youth, he renounced with the Lutheran Catechism also the ethics which he had read into Schiller's works. A preconceived interpretation, a childhood influence too strong to permit later wholly unbiased evaluations: these, then, are the causes to which we ascribe in part Paul Ernst's misinterpretation of Schiller.

About the contradictions between Paul Ernst's various judgments of the dramatic qualities of Wallenstein as compared with Don Carlos we would say this: Paul Ernst may have changed his mind. If that be the assumption, however, then it seems passing strange that he should not have offered the slightest explanation, not even in a footnote, nor ever referred to such a change of mind. The contradictions stand there in all their nakedness as if Paul Ernst were not at all aware of them. Moreover, his theories of drama underwent no important changes during the years separating the contradictory statements, which could possibly serve as an explanation.

Much simpler than the assumption of a well-founded change of mind is the assumption that in this essay on Don Carlos, as admittedly so often, Paul Ernst reasoned not as we would expect a critic to reason, i.e., from facts to conclusions, but vice versa from conclusions to facts. In other words, he did some wishful thinking. He had made up his mind that the collapse, political, military, and moral, of his people was to be explained by a failure of its classical writers to speak from the soul of their

⁴⁷Cf. Jünger, p. 97.

people. The object of his particular censure was Kant. But Kant had not penetrated into the thinking of the masses. Schiller had. Hence the Kantian poison must be found in Schiller. Hence Schiller must be made to appear as having degenerated constantly after his acquaintance with Kant's ideas. Hence Schiller's best work must come prior to this acquaintance and later works must be made out as inferior to the earlier ones. Former judgments to the contrary must simply be forgotten in the service of a cause!

If that seem harsh, the facts would seem to justify the harshness. A man who does not care to explain what Paul Ernst does not explain exposes himself to whatever explanations of his inconsistencies seem most reasonable. But it need not be harsh. Paul Ernst wanted to do his people a service. That had always been his purpose. Objective scholarship in itself was never one of his aims. When such scholarship could furnish convincing arguments, well and good. In its own right, it had no place in Paul Ernst's scheme of things.--Moreover, is it not entirely possible to assume that he had completely forgotten his former opinions on Wallenstein by the time he formulated his later judgment? Several hectic years lay between the composition of the little articles in the "Erstausgabe" of Credo and the publication of Der Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus.

4. Agreements.

Though Paul Ernst went too far in the severity of his criticism of Schiller, though he involved himself in a contradiction, and though he may have misinterpreted the tendency of all of Schiller's mature years and works, it does not follow, as one might assume, that his entire contribution to the field of Schiller research is for this reason of negligible value.

He was an artist. The proverbial artistic temperament drove him to extremes. An amotional

element encroached upon the domains of the intellect. Wishful thinking seems to have marred his presentations of results. But also, just because he was an artist, he may have had an insight which a mere scholar never could have had. Intuition, or inspiration, may have led him to find an essentially new truth which mere reasoning would never have discovered.

These possibilities come to mind and grow into probabilities as one compares the new trend which modern Schiller research has followed since the publication of Paul Ernst's contribution with the general consensus of opinions on Schiller which obtained before he wrote.

Paul Ernst was one of the first critics to stress the harmful effect of the Kantian influence upon Schiller so strongly as to call it a national disaster. Since then a good many investigators have come to quite similar conclusions. Paul Ernst, too, was one of the first critics since Otto Ludwig to dare to condemn roundly various masterpieces of Schiller's as technically poor. Several others have done so since and shown up new dependencies on the part of Schiller, the extent of which no one suspected before. Among them are the following whose contributions will now be reviewed: (1) Herald Jensen, (2) Hermann Gumbel, (3) Werner Deubel, (4) Kathleen Cunningham, (5) Hermann Schneider, (6) Herbert Cysarz, and (7) Wilhelm Dilthey.

Herald Jensen

Herald Jensen, a Norwegian, seems to have been the first one after Paul Ernst to have approached the Schiller problem from the same angle as Ernst. In a substantial book, entitled Schiller zwischen Goethe und Kant, published in Oslo in 1927, he develops the thesis that the phenomenon Schiller must be interpreted, primarily, as a clash, in one individual, of old Germanic paganism with Christian culture and Christian ethics. Both traits, as smouldering embers and potential conflagrations, are within him from birth, as they are, to a less

pronounced degree, in every German. The Karlsschule and Goethe fanned the one; Schiller's early religious training and his immersion in Kantian ideas fanned the other into consuming flames.

So wurde er das tragische Schlachtfeld dieser Gegensätze, so vertiefte sich der angeborene Zwiespalt immer mehr, so musste er diesen harten und traurigen Weg wandern, der zur unvermeidlichen geistigen Erschöpfung führte.⁴⁸

Battlefield and victim, at the same time, of that larger "Kulturkampf" between "Natur" and "Geist," "sarx" and "pneuma": that, to Herald Jensen, is Schiller.

With Nietzsche and Klages and, later, Deubel, Herald Jensen deplores that Schiller did not win his way through to an out and out agreement with Goethe and a clear-cut abjuration of Kant. And it is in this attitude that he agrees with Paul Ernst, who had blamed the abortive results of Schiller's noble fight to create a typically German drama upon the influence of an impossible metaphysics inherited from the sage of Königsberg. Herald Jensen does not say much about drama. He is concerned with "Weltanschauung," rather than with art. But as far as he goes, he agrees with Paul Ernst here, too. With him, he praises the character of Philipp in Don Carlos and deprecates e.g., the whole of Braut von Messina, though not Wallenstein.

Herald Jensen calls Wallenstein autobiographical. In the hesitating, vacillating, torn soul of the mighty general he finds the soul of Schiller himself. Hence "Die reine Liebe des Künstlers" with which Schiller works on the elaboration of this character in whom both parts of himself are equally represented; and hence the plea

⁴⁸Herald Jensen, Schiller zwischen Goethe und Kant, Oslo, 1927, p. 12.

for sympathetic understanding by posterity contained in the words:

Doch -- -- -- soll ihn jetzt die Kunst
Auch eurem Herzen menschlich näher bringen.

Hence, too, the premonition of his own death from exhaustion, and short of the goal, which is expressed in the manner of Wallenstein's death.

Nicht seine Schuld, nicht sein Verbrechen
hat ihn in den Tod getrieben, sondern
vielmehr die innere Unmöglichkeit, sein
verwegenes Vorhaben mit vollen ungeteilten
Geisteskräften zu Ende zu führen.⁴⁹

For, to justify this whole interpretation:

So tief dringt man nicht in eine fremde
Seele hinein, wie Schiller hier in die Seele
Wallenstein's eingedrungen ist, ohne in
seiner eigenen Brust die geheimen Zugänge
zur Deutung des fremden Wesens zu besitzen.⁵⁰

In one point only is there a marked difference between Paul Ernst's critique and Jensen's. Paul Ernst mentions only Kant as the mischief maker, Jensen calls attention to the reading of Leibnitz and, particularly, Shaftesbury at the "Karlsschule," and to the fact that the basic "Natur-Geist" problem was already contained in the body-mind problem with which the young Schiller wrestled when he called the subject of his graduation-essay a "Versuch über den Zusammenhang der tierischen Natur des Menschen mit seiner geistigen."

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 12.

Hermann Gumbel

If Herald Jensen may be said to have elaborated Paul Ernst's critique of Schiller by extending it to the pre-Kantian era, another very recent contributor may be said to have successfully re-enforced it so far as the later dramas of Schiller are concerned. He is Hermann Gumbel, writing in the Jahrbuch des Freien Deutschen Hochstifts Frankfurt am Main for 1932-33 under the title "Die realistische Wendung des späten Schiller."

Gumbel first claims that all Schiller research has woefully neglected proper textual criticism. He recommends "unmittelbares Textverständnis" and says:

Man versperrt sich oft und leicht richtigen Einsichten, wenn man von den ästhetischen Schriften her und mit einer allzufesten Vorstellung von Schillers Weltanschauung an so bekannte und jedermann im Ohr liegende Dichtungen herantritt. Da hilft vielleicht eine ausdrückliche Hinwendung zur Einzeldeutung voran. ⁵¹

With that in mind, he lists a large collection of lines from Schiller's ballads and later poems, which breathe very definitely the spirit of sensual enjoyment of life, transcendental values now having become at least questionable. His motto is a fair sample of the kind of quotations he cites:

Und trifft es morgen, so lasset uns heut
Noch schlürfen die Neige der köstlichen Zeit.⁵²

⁵¹Op. cit., p. 131.

⁵²Loc. cit.

A characteristic assertion says:

Die Lebensbejahung, der Eigenwert des irdischen Glücks ist nur Folge eines wachsenden Pessimismus hinsichtlich des Glaubens an eine sinnvolle Notwendigkeit.⁵³

And his conclusion runs like this:

Schiller hätte, wäre ihm länger zu leben vergönnt gewesen, mit allem bisherigen brechen und einen ganz neuen Gestaltungskreis schlagen müssen.⁵⁴

Speaking in some detail of Schiller's later dramas, Gumbel, however, flatly contradicts two important points in Paul Ernst's criticism. He denies that Schiller never experienced "Notwendigkeit," and he asserts that Schiller stressed the hero's subjugation under a cruel fate not only once or occasionally but often, if not consistently.

Regarding the first of these differences with Paul Ernst, Gumbel asks:

Wo mag die Antriebskraft liegen für Schillers Hinwendung zur Wirklichkeit, zum Dasein in seiner Tragik, zur Person, zu Süszigkeit und Verwirrung des Gefühls?⁵⁵

and answers his own question thus:

Wir müssen sie an demselben Punkt suchen, wo sie schon einmal hervorgebrochen war, um die gewaltige Auseinandersetzung mit Kant, das philosophische Ringen im letzten Jahrzehnt

⁵³Ibid., p. 137.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 159.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 157.

des 18. Jahrhunderts in Gang und zu Ende zu bringen. Das ist die eigene Krankheit und das eigene Todeserlebnis. Die Bedeutung der Krankheit für Schillers Wesen und Leben ist weit grösser, als man bisher gesehen hat, und vielleicht ist nur sie es gewesen, die den antithetischen Intellektualisten daran hinderte, ein Romantiker zu werden. Die furchtbare Stunde des Ringens mit dem Tode im Jahre 1791, die gleichsam im Mittelpunkte des Dichterlebens steht, kann wohl in der Tiefe ihrer Auswirkung gar nicht überschätzt werden.⁵⁶

Gumbel does not use the term "Notwendigkeit" here, but he has used it before, and in this connection, the same idea is contained in the word "Ohnmächtigkeit" when he says:

Schiller kommt aus dem Idealismus in das Gefühl letzter Ohnmächtigkeit des Ideals gegenüber dem Wirklichen.⁵⁷

Regarding the other difference with Paul Ernst, Gumbel says that not only did Schiller experience fate, human impotence, necessity, but he taught it in his plays.

Im späteren Drama laufen zwei Bahnen neben einander her, idealistisch die Behauptung der Freiheit, deterministisch die Uebermacht des Schicksals. Und wieder drückt sich diese Spannung aus im Widerspiel von Furchtbarkeit und Feindschaft des Fatums und Hinwendung zu Glück, Liebe und Daseinsgenuss in idyllischer Weltferne. Das geht in seiner Kraszheit auf beiden Wegen, dem der Umstände und dem der Auflehnung gegen das Erhabene, der Flucht

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 157.

⁵⁷Ibid., p. 159.

vor dem Schicksal, fast bis zu jener Art von Tragik, wie sie Seneca besitzt.⁵⁸

And again:

Mag die Idee des unausweichlichen Schicksals nun griechisch sein oder nicht, sicher ist, dasz sie in den obengenannten Stücken Schillers eine beherrschende Stellung inne hat. Am Ende des Prozesses taucht dann ein Schicksal auf, das wie bei Kleist blindes Ungefähr, sinnloser Zufall ist.⁵⁹

The present writer is inclined to follow Gumbel here, rather than Paul Ernst, just as he is inclined to grant Herald Jensen's elaboration of Paul Ernst's estimate with regard to the young Schiller. The important observation, however, is that here again there is an essential agreement of a recent investigator with Paul Ernst's criticism. Gumbel has demonstrated, by innumerable quotations, the existence in Schiller of a strong vein of realism and cynicism, and, thus, together with Schiller's admitted idealism, the existence of a dualism, an uncertainty, a vacillation, which Paul Ernst says would not have occurred except for the unfortunate influence of Kantian ideas. Thus Gumbel may be said to have accumulated later the evidence which proves correct the Paul Ernstian premise that Schiller's powers were crippled after 1790. That the amount and weight of this evidence were not suspected may be gleaned from the wording of a review of Gumbel's essay in Jahresbericht über die Wissenschaftlichen Erscheinungen auf dem Gebiete der Neueren Deutschen Literatur for 1936. It says in part: "Der ernster Beachtung und Auseinandersetzung werthe Aufsatz (ist ein gewichtiger,

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 147.

⁵⁹Loc. cit.

wenn auch gewisz nicht abschliessender Beitrag zu dem immer dringlicher werdenden Problem der letzten Schaffensjahre des Dichters." ⁶⁰

Werner Deubel

The Jahrbuch der Goethe-Gesellschaft for 1934 contains an article by Werner Deubel entitled "Umriss eines neuen Schillerbildes." An abstract of it, with some few additions, has since appeared as Schillers Kampf um die Tragödie. ⁶¹

Werner Deubel, as has already been indicated, is completely under the influence of Ludwig Klages, admittedly and enthusiastically so. With Klages he charges that all thinking which is logocentric is false simply because the logos is a mental abstraction and no more. All thinking, so the argument goes, should instead be biocentric. "Die lebendige Leib-Seele" should be the one norm by which to judge.

This "Leib-Seele," this living human soul, is then seen as essentially and inherently and comprehensively tragic, simply because the body part of it does not last, and because, while it does last, the prospect of death is ever present. Shall death be feared or welcomed? In either case, it is inevitable. Hence, man's life is tragic. It is a struggle into which his fate has put him, and from which he cannot escape, and in which he cannot hope to win. Yet though he must lose, at least he can lose with a flourish. Breathing defiance, he can act as if he were just as independent as the fate that crushes him and, ideally, anticipate it by committing suicide just in time.

Of course one is well aware that the mature Paul Ernst would not have agreed entirely with Deubel's theories. He preached, as we know, resignation, confidence, trust, even humility instead of defiance. But, except for this final matter of attitude, there is substantial agreement between Paul Ernst and

⁶⁰p. 107.

⁶¹Berlin-Lichterfelde, 1935.

Deubel. It is important to stress this agreement. Both men conclude that if tragedy is "Weltanschauungsdichtung," it follows that tragedy must show man in his conflict with this fate. It must show the struggle of the individual soul not, as in Schiller's dramas, with itself but with the soul of the universe: "Das Ich gegen das All."

Thus it becomes quite evident that Werner Deubel and Paul Ernst, having set up similar definitions, should offer somewhat similar criticisms of Schiller. There are differences, however. Indeed, Werner Deubel's Umrisse may very well be considered an elaboration of Paul Ernst's essay on Don Carlos from which he quotes once and to which he alludes many times.

In the first place, Werner Deubel, like Herald Jensen does not put all the blame upon Kant. He says Schiller's own original genius (sein reiner Dämon) was contaminated by this unholy "Geistesphilosophie" long before Goethe, ironically, finally persuaded him to read the Kantian "Critiques."⁶² He does not say so explicitly, but the inference is plain: Schiller's boyhood training in orthodox Lutheranism did the damage. Anyway, even Die Räuber is spoiled by it. Karl Moor is the victim, not of fate, but of his own bad conscience (which, presumably, should not have been bad!) Fiesco shows the divided allegiance of Schiller, who wants to be on the side of law and order, but yet cannot deny his natural sympathy for the revolutionary. Kabale und Liebe is not mentioned. According to Werner Deubel, then, Kant but aggravated

⁶²This is contrary to the generally accepted belief that it was Körner through whom Schiller was introduced to Kant. Proof will be found in Herald Jensen's book, Schiller zwischen Goethe und Kant, Oslo, 1927 (pp. 14, 37 and 38). It is quite conclusive, being based upon Schiller's and Körner's own words in their correspondence. The date of Schiller's final turning to Kant at the advice of Goethe, is March 5, 1791. As late as September 7, 1787, Körner had written: "(Es) möchte mich bald verdrieszen, (dasz) ich dir immer vergebe. von Kant vorgeprediget habe."

a bad tendency already existing, whereas Paul Ernst, being more interested in the final causes of the failure of German idealism than in Schiller's development, stresses only that source of "infection" which made the "disease" permanent and fatal.

In the second place, Werner Deubel chooses Wallenstein, not Don Carlos, as Schiller's best play. Paul Ernst has found Schiller's nemesis in Kant. The best of Schiller for him, therefore, comes chronologically earlier than Schiller's discipleship of Kant. Werner Deubel like Herald Jensen, wants to stress Goethe as the man who might have become Schiller's guardian angel, and whose temporary influence turned Schiller for a while into the right direction. Hence, of course, he must place his highest approval upon the work of that period, which happens to be Wallenstein.

Such an explanation of the difference in their respective choices might seem disrespectful if it were not for the possibility of this explanation: Paul Ernst is talking about dramatic structure. He means to say that Schiller comes closest to real tragedy, in his sense of the word, in Don Carlos. Werner Deubel is talking about biocentric values. He means to say that there is more "Lebensgefühl" in Wallenstein than in any other Schillerian production. Consequently we find no basic contradiction. Esthetically Don Carlos is best, metaphysically Wallenstein takes the honors.

This agrees very nicely, also, with Gumbel's findings ⁶³ on the increasingly realistic attitude of the late Schiller, the terms realism and "Lebensgefühl" being largely synonymous. It will likewise serve to remind us that, whereas Werner Deubel's interest may be partly to re-evaluate classical German literature in the light of present-day ideas, Paul Ernst's interest is primarily formal, structural, architectural.

⁶³Op. cit.

Thirdly, Werner Deubel and Paul Ernst differ in their attitude toward Shakespeare. Werner Deubel speaks of the Briton as having had a "mächtiges Durchdrungensein von der Allgewalt des Schicksals" and says: "Tränenlos wie die Nornen knüpft Shakespeare das unentrinnbare Gewebe."⁶⁴ Paul Ernst does not admit this is all. He says:

Jedenfalls ist das doch klar, dasz in der Dichtung, deren Urbild die alte Tragödie ist, der Charakter nicht eine so bedeutende Rolle spielen kann, wie in der Dichtung, deren Urbild Shakespeare ist.⁶⁵

And even:

Das Bedenkliche bei Shakespeare ist, dasz er mit den Charaktereigenschaften zweiten Ranges baut, sein Gerüst nicht mit den ersten Eigenschaften baut wie die antiken Tragiker.⁶⁶

Again:

Man kann kühn behaupten, dasz die erste wirkliche Ahnung von den griechischen Tragikern auf der Höhe der deutschen klassischen Zeit zu finden ist.⁶⁷

Indeed, Paul Ernst does not hesitate to state:

Aber heute können wir uns klarmachen, dasz Shakespeare, obwohl er erst vor einigen Jahrhunderten gestorben ist, uns um nichts näher steht wie Sophokles; und dasz unsere Klassiker, als sie sich in Shakespeareschen Formen ausdrückten, genau denselben

⁶⁴Op. cit., p. 7.

⁶⁵Z.d.d.I., p. 189.

⁶⁶Ibid., p. 197.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 203.

Maskenscherz begingen, wie die Franzosen, als sie sich in den Sophokleischen Formen ausdrückten.⁶⁸

The difference thus expressed cannot be fundamental, however, because in their most damaging indictment they are both in agreement once more. Paul Ernst says of Shakespeare's form: "Auf das Hinterden-Begebenheiten ist sie nicht berechnet,"⁶⁹ while Werner Deuble gives expression to the same idea when he speaks of the most essential religious element as of something "das dem Shakespeare fenlt."⁷⁰

To go into the differences between Paul Ernst's and Werner Deubel's definitions of fate as applied to Shakespeare's dramas would lead too far afield. We are concerned with Paul Ernst and Schiller, and have merely cited the few differences between the former's critique of the latter and Werner Deubel's Umriss in order to stress the fact that in all else the two later men agree. Quotations could easily be multiplied. Three may stand for the rest. Referring to both Schiller's philosophy and his dramatics, Werner Deubel says, quoting the well-known lines:

Unheilbar wie die körperliche Krankheit ist
aber auch die Vergiftung seines Wesens durch
Kant:

'Zwei Jahrzehnte kostest du mir:
Zehn Jahre verlor ich, dich zu begreifen,
Und zehn, mich zu befreien von dir.'⁷¹

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 220.

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 224.

⁷⁰Op. cit., p. 8.

Specifically agreeing with Paul Ernst, he writes:⁷¹

Der moralische Gedanke von der im Willen gegründeten Freiheit des Geists, ... dieser Gedanke, zur transzendentalen Gewisheit erhoben und das A und O der Kantischen Philosophie, wird für Schiller die Waffe, mit der er, der geblütige Tragiker, verblendet gegen die Tragödie zu Felde zieht.⁷²

And he adds:

Im Don Carlos hat der Idealist den Tragiker übermächtigt, und die Selbstzerstörung Schiller's ist vollendet.⁷³

Kathleen Cunningham

The contributions to recent Schiller research by Jensen, Gumbel, and Deubel all deal primarily with the metaphysical thought content, or religion, of Schiller's dramas, and attempt, in each case, to build a progressively developed, coherent, and organic whole out of their totality. Two other important publications during the present decade approach the same problem from the point of view of literary style, dramatic structure, and language.

First of these, in point of time, is a dissertation written at Bonn, in 1930, by Kathleen Cunningham, entitled: Schiller und die französische Klassik. It commands attention, if only because it was inspired by J. G. Robertson and completed under the direction of Oskar Walzel.

Miss Cunningham shows in considerable detail that the influence of French writers upon Schiller, notably that of Corneille and Racine, is much greater than has commonly been supposed, extending at

⁷¹Ibid., p. 32.

⁷²Ibid., p. 29.

⁷³Ibid., p. 15.

times to an exact correspondence in the arrangement of scenes and even to verbatim translations.⁷⁴

Her main conclusion contains this sentence:

Erst in der dritten Fassung des "Don Carlos" wendet sich Schiller endgültig vom Sturm und Drang ab und entscheidet sich für die haute tragédie....Einen engen Anschluss an die französische Klassik bedeutet Schillers mittlere Periode, wobei "Wallenstein" hauptsächlich eine Verwandtschaft mit Corneille und "Maria Stuart" eine Synthese der Kunst Corneilles und Racines darstellt."⁷⁵

This represents, of course, only a partial agreement with Paul Ernst, who had maintained that Schiller's course had veered away from high tragedy after "Don Carlos." But in the body of her presentation, Miss Cunningham quite agrees also on this point. Giving Paul Ernst credit for having formulated "ein Urteil, das sich unbewusst schon längst in der Schillerkritik gebildet hatte," she says:

Wie Paul Ernst richtig herausgefühlt hat, scheinen wirklich in diesem Drama die Eigenschaften der hohen Tragoedie in viel höherem Masse vorhanden zu sein, als in den späteren Dramen.⁷⁶

Again she agrees with him in charging that Schiller has "verbürgerlicht" high tragedy and spoiled its organism by the insertion of love scenes.⁷⁷

Her reasons are particularly interesting if we remember that Paul Ernst had found two causes for

⁷⁴Op. cit., pp. 94 and 72.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 135.

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 45 and 46.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 70.

Schiller's downfall: Kantian ethics and an unworthy desire for popularity. Miss Cunningham has only a few passing references to the first cause, but she repeatedly stresses the second, her difference from Paul Ernst being that she approves Schiller's motives and regards his changes as improvements.

Was Schiller im allgemeinen an der französischen Klassik auszusetzen hat, (ist) "Kälte," "Magerkeit," "Trockenheit."⁷⁸

and noting Schiller's efforts to overcome these deficiencies by a general loosening of the old and more rigid dramatic forms, she approvingly quotes Max Scherrer as follows:

aber er erweitert durch diesen Zuwachs ... doch nur die klassische Form und stöszt sie nicht um.⁷⁹

Parenthetically, we are indebted to Miss Cunningham for this very clear formulation:

Gemeinsam ist (beiden, den Griechen und den Franzosen) die analytische Form; aber während den Griechen die so geschaffene tragische Situation das eindringliche Symbol des Schicksalsgedankens bedeutet, stellt sie für die Franzosen die künstlerische formale Voraussetzung zur Entfaltung eines ästhetischen Leidenschaftsgemäldes dar. Bei Schiller sind beide Züge vereint, nur dasz das Ethische über das Aesthetische das Schwergewicht behauptet.⁸⁰

Hermann Schneider

Miss Cunningham's dissertation, we said, gained considerable weight because it was inspired

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 64.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 110.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 118.

by the studies in literary form of Oskar Walzel, under whose general direction the work was written. If so, we find two outstanding scholars coming to very similar conclusions. The other man is Hermann Schneider of Tübingen. His contributions are contained in two volumes entitled, respectively: Vom Wallenstein zum Demetrius (1933) and Schiller, Werk und Erbe (1934).

Schneider accepts Miss Cunningham's conclusions concerning the French influence on Schiller and goes on to show that the English influence upon him was almost as great, thus rounding out a picture of Schiller which shows him ever so much more indebted to foreign patterns than anyone had suspected. The indebtedness goes much farther than Schiller himself knew for that matter, but in its broad outlines, his borrowings from the French classicists and from Shakespeare are perfectly conscious and deliberate acts on the part of a poet who tries desperately to find a dramatic style appropriate to his own particular genius. They continue throughout his career because not until the final year of his life did Schiller arrive at his goal according to Schneider. "Dem Demetrius wäre der grosze Wurf gelungen," but up to that point, all the products of Schiller's pen are in the nature of experiments, the last of them, Tell, being in many ways the least successful of them all.⁸¹

Such is Schneider's thesis; and thus he agrees substantially with Paul Ernst. He has very little to say on the metaphysical content of the various plays. There is only an occasional reference to Kant in Schneider's books, but on the development of a needed new, peculiarly German, style of dramatic composition, he speaks almost with Paul Ernst's own words, who had written:

⁸¹Hermann Schneider, Vom Wallenstein zum Demetrius, p. 97.

Man bedenke immer wieder: Schiller sollte--nicht nur ohne Muster: das musz ja Jeder, der Etwas aus sich selber schafft--er sollte unter der unbewuszten Herrschaft falscher Vorbilder ganz aus seinem eignen Erleben eine Tragödie erschaffen.⁸²

Schneider arrives at a different estimate of the progress Schiller made from then on, but he quite agrees with Paul Ernst that "die heillose Zersplitterung"⁸³ begins with the period following upon the completion of Don Carlos. This play had shown commendable progress and real achievement.

Für uns erreicht Schiller in diesem Drama einen Höhepunkt. Er hat gröszere Würfe getan, aber diese maszvolle, zielbewusste Stileinheitlichkeit zeigt keiner seiner noch so gewaltigen und so heisz ringenden Versuche.⁸⁴

But from then on, until Demetrius, Schiller flounders. The utter lack of suitable patterns in all previous German literature proved too great a handicap for him. Schiller's own pathetic lack of "Masz" and "Geschmack," coupled with a want of certain vital experiences, e.g., nature, court life, women, cause him to make blunders which any ordinary third-rate poet would have avoided. He is so uncertain, indeed, that important and main characters are delineated in a manner which makes them nearly impossible of presentation on the stage because of their duality, e.g., Illo and Tell.

But, to repeat, according to Schneider, Schiller finally succeeds in his titanic struggle. For Paul Ernst, Schiller's case is a hopeless one. Paul Ernst might have summarized his own wishes in

⁸²Z.d.d.I., p. 241.

⁸³Vom W.z.D., p. 77.

⁸⁴Werk und Erbe, p. 15.

the matter by exclaiming: "If only Schiller could have been left alone." Schneider would have been content to exclaim: "If only Schiller could have lived a little longer!"

Herbert Cysarz

A very curious hypothetical agreement with Paul Ernst's criticism of Schiller is also found in the latest large monograph on his life and work written by Herbert Cysarz. He, of course, is much more enthusiastic and much less critical than Paul Ernst. His task is to defend Schiller and to glorify him. He does not agree with Paul Ernst's narrow definition of tragedy at all; yet he admits, without mentioning names, that Paul Ernst's estimate of Schiller's works, on the basis of his definitions, is quite correct. He says:

Wenn es das Wesen der Tragödie wäre, in einen unheilbaren Bruch zu münden, dann bliebe bestenfalls, und nur vordergründig, der Carlos eine Tragödie.⁸⁵

Of course, he himself judges differently. With particular reference to Maria Stuart, but with all the other great dramas of Schiller's maturity in mind, he says:

Solch unvergleichlich ernstem Sinnen- und Weihepiel den Namen Tragödie zu weigern ist Willkür.⁸⁶

Thus he would not only condemn much of Paul Ernst's criticism as simply a pedantic quarrel over terminology, but he goes farther and defends Schiller against all the fault-finding both of the dramatic theorists and of the anti-Kant philosophers. As if he had had a copy of Paul Ernst and Werner Deubel

⁸⁵Cysarz, Schiller, p. 333.

⁸⁶Ibid., p. 346.

on his desk while he wrote, Cysarz answers Paul Ernst with a constant emphasis upon "necessity" as displayed in Schiller's dramas, and both Jensen and Deubel, with the declaration:

Wer Schiller von Kant and Goethe her
deutet, hat seine Haltung und Lehre vorweg
miszverstanden.⁸⁷

Regarding the element of necessity which Paul Ernst had missed in Schiller's dramas, Cysarz says not only that it is there but that precisely this very necessity is the cardinal element in all of Schiller's tragedies.

Wie Goethe in der Kunst des Möglichen,
fuszt Schiller im Mut des Notwendigen.⁸⁸

Or:

Die Wucht und Notwendigkeit aber von
Schiller's Konflikt kennt nicht
ihresgleichen.⁸⁹

Or, with particular reference to Wallenstein:

(In der) Tragizität des Handelns, die
schon darin besteht, dasz nan überhaupt
handeln muss, enthüllt Schiller
gleichsam die Keplerischen Gesetze . . . des
Schicksals.⁹⁰

Cysarz finds this element of necessity in Schiller's works to be based upon the very foundations which Paul Ernst had found wanting in him. Paul Ernst

⁸⁷Ibid., p. 167.

⁸⁸Ibid., p. 88.

⁸⁹Ibid., p. 33.

⁹⁰Ibid., pp. 8 and 9.

had said that Schiller lacked the experience of necessity in his life. Cysarz says:

Bis an das Ende Schillers prallen Helden-
schicksal und Umwelt in ungeheurer Gegensätz-
lichkeit zusammen.⁹¹

Thus it is quite evident that Cysarz comes to an entirely different evaluation of Schiller's works. He sees fine and consistent progress from one drama to another, and absolute mastery of materials and means everywhere. He also denies the claims of Deubel and Gumbel that Schiller was about to leave his previous idealistic course when death overtook him, and had, in fact, already become a cynic and skeptic. Cysarz says:

Schlechtweg nichts zeugt dafür, dasz der
sterbende Schiller zum Hamlet oder zum Hiob
geworden sei.⁹²

Wilhelm Dilthey

An entirely different approach to Schiller is found in one of the posthumously edited essays of Wilhelm Dilthey,⁹³ whose lectures on history Paul Ernst attended while he was a student in the University of Berlin.⁹⁴ It is neither metaphysical nor stylistic in nature but pragmatically comprehensive, presenting Schiller as a great force in the life of his nation and as the creator of the modern historical drama.⁹⁵

Dilthey believes that Schiller had within himself, originally, three great possibilities. He might have become a great political or military leader, if his urge for activity had won the upper hand over his other inclinations. Or, he might have

⁹¹Ibid., p. 44.

⁹²Ibid., p. 400

⁹³Wilhelm Dilthey, Von deutscher Dichtung und Musik, Leipzig, 1933.

⁹⁴Cf. Jüngl., p. 158.

⁹⁵Op. cit., pp. 382 and 385.

become a great philosopher, if his predilections toward abstract thinking had prevailed. As it was, he became a great poet because the emotional part of his nature was strongest of all.

Aber in Schiller war ein Streben nach grossen Gefühlen (und weil) . . . seine Ideen im Gemüte verwurzelt sind, haben sie die ganze Zeit mitfortgerissen.⁹⁶

And as such, he seems to Dilthey to have come just at the right time. The sixteenth century had brought religious liberty. The seventeenth had added intellectual emancipation. The eighteenth was destined to consummate the development by bringing political freedom. Hence Wallenstein and Tell are, for Dilthey, the outstanding productions of Schiller.

The details of this appreciation as touching Paul Ernst's criticisms are particularly interesting because Dilthey's essay is the only one of the recent contributions here mentioned which was written before Paul Ernst published his essay on Don Carlos though not printed until shortly before Paul Ernst's death.

Dilthey agrees with Paul Ernst in many a positive demand he makes of the ideal drama. But, nevertheless, Paul Ernst's criticism of Schiller are denied by Dilthey almost step for step.

Paul Ernst regards Don Carlos as Schiller's nearest approach to dramatic excellence. Dilthey would nominate Wallenstein and Tell for these honors. Second, Paul Ernst says that Kant drew Schiller from his true path, Dilthey says, agreeing in this respect partly with Deubel:

So beweist diese Dichtung ("Die Künstler"), dass Schiller vor seinem Studium Kants aus seiner eigenen Natur heraus seine Grundgedanken

⁹⁶Ibid., pp. 354 and 350.

ergriffen hatte. Er zeigte dieselbe Unabhngigkeit von Kant, als Goethe von Spinoza.⁹⁷

Paul Ernst had agreed with Friedrich Schlegel, as we mentioned above,⁹⁸ that Schiller's imagination had been spoiled from the beginning; Dilthey grants that it had certain limitations:

Sicher bleibt er in der poetischen Gestaltungskraft, in der Phantasie weit hinter Shakespeare.⁹⁹ ... Er konnte nicht zart und rein, wie die Natur wirkt, vernehmen, was sie ihm zu sagen hatte.¹⁰⁰

But still he maintains it was a "Phantasie von ganz ausserordentlicher Strke" and Schiller himself "ein Mensch von mchtigster Phantasie."¹⁰¹ Paul Ernst says that Schiller never experienced necessity; Dilthey asserts that he has had this experience.

Schiller ist der tragischeste unserer Dichter, weil er in der Jugend hart gegen sich selbst war, weil er spter seinen Krper und sein Leben nur als Material groszen Wirkens ansah und weil er schliesslich lange Jahre in der feierlichen Nhe des Todes, nur das rtselhafte Problem seines eigenen Schicksals vor Augen, seine hchsten Werke hervorbrachte.¹⁰²

In fact, Dilthey interprets the whole of Wallenstein as a composition showing a man "in des Lebens Drang."

⁹⁷Ibid., p. 358.

⁹⁸P. 56.

⁹⁹Op. cit., p. 389.

¹⁰⁰Ibid., p. 360.

¹⁰¹Ibid., pp. 344 and 362.

¹⁰²Ibid., pp. 347 and 348.

Dieses Drama ist nicht nur philosophischer als die Philosophie, sondern auch historischer als die Geschichte. (Es lehrt uns die geschichtliche Welt und ihre durchgreifenden gegensätzlichen Verhältnisse verstehen.) Ein solches groszes gegensätzliches Verhältnis ist: dasz es Helden gibt, welche für sich und aus sich zum Schicksal für eine ganze Welt werden. Ein anderes soches Verhältnis ist in der tragischen Ironie enthalten, nach welcher wir uns dann am sichersten dünken, wenn über uns von anderen Händen die Würfel geworfen werden. Wieder ein anderes liegt in dem furchtbaren Kontrast der Notwendigkeit, sich zu entscheiden, und der menschlichen Unwissenheit.¹⁰³

Thus we may conclude that Dilthey would agree, as would Gumbel, that Schiller was much more nearly a man and poet after Paul Ernst's heart than the latter himself ever realized.

* * * * *

These excursions into post-war Schiller research might be continued. They would not always reveal any direct influence of Paul Ernst's ideas, nor would they in all cases disclose that such research was stimulated exclusively by the activities of the so-called neoclassical school of which Paul Ernst was the acknowledged leader. But they would indicate that we are still far from a general agreement on important questions regarding the German classical period.

¹⁰³

Ibid., p. 411.

Part Three

PAUL ERNST AS A DRAMATIST AFTER THE MANNER OF SCHILLER

In the first section of this dissertation, it was our purpose to show that important factors in Paul Ernst's life predisposed him toward a similarity with Schiller in outlook and purpose, and that this similarity existed in the mature Paul Ernst in spite of experiences and opinions tending to draw him away from the Schiller model.

In the second section, we reviewed that portion of Paul Ernst's works which deals specifically with Schiller and his accomplishments. We hope to have convinced the reader that Paul Ernst labored under a misapprehension of the real Schiller and that his strictures of Schiller were too severe in themselves and inconsistent with other pronouncements of his on the same subject. We ventured to suggest that wishful thinking, combined with uncorrected childhood impressions, was responsible for these errors.

In the final section, it is now our purpose to demonstrate that an altogether wrong impression of Paul Ernst's attitude and relationship to Schiller would be gained if his criticisms of Schiller alone were taken as evidence, and that, as a matter of fact, Paul Ernst deserves to be known as a man who, a century later, continued a struggle for essentially the same ethical values and esthetic principles as those for which Schiller had fought all his life.

If so far our attention has been largely centered on metaphysics and ethics, it will now be focussed more directly upon theories of dramatic composition--though, of course, there is no sharp

dividing line.

Our presentation of pertinent data will be as follows: First, we shall seek to determine to what extent it is proper to call Paul Ernst a neo-classicist. Then we shall discuss detailed agreements between Ernst and Schiller on matters of dramatic composition. Finally, we shall concern ourselves with the problems of guilt and atonement on the one hand and of freedom and necessity on the other.

1. Neo-Classicism.

In politics, Paul Ernst began as a Socialist and developed into a Fascist, an advocate of a totalitarian state. In literature, he began as a naturalist and developed into a formalist.

The latter term is applied to Paul Ernst in Georg von Lukacs' book, entitled Die Seele und die Formen. It would seem to be an accurate description and a useful classification of a man who believed that all excellence in literary productions depended upon a mastery of certain basic and unchanging forms, a man who set out to discover, or re-discover these forms, and who believed that he had found them and applied them successfully. At any rate, it is a term which describes succinctly that opposite in literary ideals toward which Paul Ernst tended when he tore himself away from the companionship of Arno Holz and his group.

Whereas the latter had found life to be largely a meaningless and confusing complexity, Paul Ernst insisted upon seeing it as a whole. While they had reduced the activities of a poet to that of a mererecording device, he insisted that anyone worthy of that name must have a positive contribution to make. Where they had been on the whole materialistic in their philosophies, and had catered openly to the appetites, he began more and more to preach a lofty moral idealism, to offer leadership, and to demand a willingness to follow. The basic difference between the naturalists with whom he had previously associated and the later Paul Ernst is characterized by

their neglect of, or contempt for, tradition and form, and his insistence that no real literary revival could be expected without a thoroughgoing study of old masters and fundamental concepts.

Because such studies went hand in hand, it is easy to comprehend why literary historians who observed Paul Ernst's course and development should have mistaken his road for his goal and called him a neo-classicist. Today that name may still be attached to several writers who at one time or another were associated with Paul Ernst, to Wilhelm Scholz and Samuel Lublinski for example; but to apply it to Paul Ernst no longer does him justice. Walter Linden dismisses it as a "törichte Etikettierung der Vergangenheit," preferring to refer to him as the prophet of the new tragedy. But as early as 1924, Friedrich Kummer had written:

Paul Ernst ist Gedankendichter. Ihn einen Neuklassiker zu nennen, kann nur zu Irrtümern führen,

significantly giving as his reason for this statement the declaration:

Von einem so strengen Stilismus wie er, waren selbst die Klassiker nicht.¹

It is, nevertheless, interesting to inquire into the use of the term "neo-classicism" and to review Paul Ernst's attitude toward such a classification.

For one thing, all such terms beginning with "neo-" smack of mere imitation, of weak and belated and only partly competent discipleship. Paul Ernst, however, thought of his life's work as far too important and far too original to be referred to in terms

¹F. Kummer, Deutsche Literaturgeschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts, 17-20. Aufl., p. 167.

carrying any such connotations. Still it might have been approved and, if not exactly welcomed, been borne without protest, if it had not openly encouraged a disastrous misunderstanding. Nor was the misunderstanding inherent in the term itself. In German literary history, the term was bound to bring to mind the names of Schiller, Goethe, and Lessing, among others, so far as the drama was concerned. Paul Ernst was not at all inclined, much as he honored them, to acknowledge these predecessors and masters as worthy of being followed blindly. Rather, his revolt against the formlessness of naturalism was no less a revolt, as well, against what he considered the near formlessness of these so-called German classics. These writers were to be subjected to penetrating criticism, and not set up as idols for purposes of literary worship. Hence it was a matter of self-defense when he protested,

Nicht Klassizismus erstreben wir, sondern
Klassizität.²

This terminology would be confusing, if Paul Ernst had not left us his definitions. He says:

Klassizismus ist eine bestimmte geschichtliche Erscheinung: der Versuch, mit fremden und naturgemäß nicht verstandenen Formen Gefühlsgehalte der Gegenwart auszudrücken.... Klassizität bedeutet Vollkommenheit. Dichtung ist Form. Das Streben nach Klassizität bedeutet also, dass der Dichter von der Form ausgeht.³

²Credo, (Erstausgabe), p. 175.

³From "Der Dichter und die Form," a posthumously edited draft of an address appearing in Die Neue Literatur for March, 1936, which also contains this sentence: "...die Tragödie unserer klassischen Dichtung, die denn nicht klassisch war, sondern klassizistisch; die ganz natürlich in Romantik enden musste, da sie selber ja nur romantisch wenn auch im weitesten Sinne war."--Cf. Tagebuch, pp. 48ff.

As it is, such clear formulations and sharp definitions can serve only to call attention to the apprehension with which Paul Ernst feared a complete misunderstanding of his aims among those who would only read reviews of his works or casual references to them, instead of reading his critical and poetical works themselves. To emphasize the point still more, he says in the same connection: "Sie werden von mir gelesen haben, dasz ich ein Klassizist sei;" and continues: "Diese Bezeichnung ist reiner Unsinn."

Paul Ernst did not intend to be taken for an imitator of imitators. That was precisely what he had charged against his illustrious predecessors.

Ich habe in meinem Zusammenbruch des deutschen Idealismus gezeigt, dasz die Dichtung unserer klassischen Zeit nicht lebendig aus dem Volksleben emporwuchs, dasz sie das Ueberkommene nicht als blosze Anregung benutzte, sondern als Vorbild, dasz sie nicht klassisch war, sondern romantisch.⁴

Nor did he want to be misunderstood as merely another blunderer who had attempted once again to put new wines into old skins. He desired to make it very plain that he had been in search of--to continue the figure--new skins, new kinds of skins, permanently usable skins.

In other words, Paul Ernst came to believe that it would be possible to discover certain basic forms for the various types of literary composition, and from them, to deduce certain sets of rules which, if followed by a competent writer, would lead him toward perfection at least, if not actually to it. Two quotations may suffice.

Es gibt für jeden Gefühlsgehalt die absolute Form, die Idee. Alle Kunst ist

⁴Jüngl., p. 38.

nichts als das Hinstreben danach, diese Idee in der Wirklichkeit zu gestalten.⁵

Die dichterischen Formen sind nicht Geschöpfe des Zufalls, sie sind erzeugt durch die ewig gleichen seelischen Ansprüche der Menschheit.⁶

These eternal forms it is that he sets out to discover. Later, he believed that he had discovered them; still later, that he had successfully used them, at least in the prose narrative and the drama.⁷

This constant preoccupation with problems of form in itself could be said to mark Paul Ernst as a successor of Schiller's. Few creative artists since Schiller have shown a greater interest in esthetics than Paul Ernst.

2. High Tragedy.

Wo Schiller heute schwächer wirkt, verdankt er das wesentlich dem Umstand, dass unsere sittlichen Ideale heute andere geworden sind, als sie in der Aufklärungszeit waren. Der schlimmste Feind alles Tragischen aber ist die Ansicht von der Relativität aller Sittlichkeit. Als Euripides den Satz aufstellte, dass dieselbe Handlung gut and böse sein könne, je nach der Person und den Umständen, da war die griechische Tragödie zu Ende.⁸

This quotation from Paul Ernst's Weg zur Form, first published in 1906, may serve as an excellent introduction to a discussion of the details of his esthetic theories. If it is taken together with another quotation, dated 1911, it will show at a glance how very firmly grounded Paul Ernst's

⁵Credo, p. 183.

⁶W.z.F., p. 126.

⁷Cf. E.G., p. 276, where Paul Ernst likens his "forms" to Plato's "ideas."

⁸W.z.F., p. 28.

esthetic convictions must have been. They remained unchanged although his ethical beliefs changed from one extreme to another. For this second quotation says:

Der Grundirrtum jeder imperativistischen Moral ist die Vorstellung, dass eine für alle Menschen gültige Ethik möglich sei.⁹

An absolutist in morals in 1906, Paul Ernst was a relativist in 1911. Still, his technical demands of the drama remained quite the same. He only changed from tragedies to "Erlösungsdramen," a matter of content rather than form. This change, of course, was necessary. Indeed one might with entire justice paraphrase Paul Ernst's reference to Euripides and say: Als Paul Ernst den Satz aufstellte, dass eine imperativistische Moral unmöglich sei, da war es mit der Paul Ernstschen Tragödie zu Ende. But, again, the difference between a tragedy and an "Erlösungsdrama" is only a difference in the philosophical content presented, not in the structure of the literary compositions so differentiated in name.

What is the difference? Paul Ernst speaks of "Schauspiele" and "Lustspiele" on the one hand, and of "Tragödien" and "Erlösungsdramen" on the other. The first two of these are intended to serve merely purposes of instruction and entertainment, the "Schauspiel" being more enthusiastically patriotic in its tendencies, the "Lustspiel" being more or less satirically critical of social conditions.

⁹Credo, p. 211. Cf. also the passage in Erdachte Gespräche, p. 303, in which the poet says: "Ich werde Ihnen nie bestreiten, dass Sie eine imperativistische Ethik im luftleeren Raum begründen können; aber ich bestreite, dass deren Sätze auf Menschen Anwendung finden können."--Like the passage from Credo, it was written during the latter half of Paul Ernst's life.

But the latter two are strictly "Weltanschauungs-dramen;" Paul Ernst's "Tragödie" being definitely a fate drama, giving expression to pagan, rather than Christian, sentiments, while his "Erlösungs-dramen" expound the religious views he held after he had experienced what he calls the "grace of God."

Perhaps a more detailed analysis of these terms will not be out of place. In both "Schicksalsdramen" and "Erlösungs-dramen" the hero dies. In the former, he dies against his will or in a defiant, protesting, self-asserting attitude. Life has cheated or at least defeated him. In the latter, however, he dies in complete confidence that life has served its purpose and that it has lifted him to new heights of being and understanding. In a "Schicksalsdrama" the conflict is one directed against other individuals or against external forces of an impersonal nature. In an "Erlösungs-drama" it occurs within the soul of the hero, other individuals merely serving the purpose of objectifying this inner conflict. Thus, for instance, Schiller's Wallenstein is a "Schicksals-drama" if H. A. Korff is right when he says:

Das ideelle Thema (der Wallenstein-Tragödie) ist ... jene Erhabenheit des grossen menschen über das Schicksal, die in Schillers theoretischen Schriften als das eigentliche Thema der Tragödie erscheint.¹⁰

On the other hand, it is an "Erlösungs-drama" if Hohenstein is right in his statement:

Der Wallenstein des Schlussakts offenbarte uns den Menschen im Stand der Todesreife, ... (d. h. einem) Zustand ... der über alle menschliche Zwiespältigkeit, über Drang und Begehren hinaus, sich zu einer Stufe der

¹⁰

Geist der Goethezeit, vol. 11, p. 260.

Vollendung erhoben hat, auf der alle menschlichen Dinge unwichtig werden! ¹¹

It is a "Schicksalsdrama" if Wallenstein does not know what is coming, or does not care, when he says: "Ich gedenke einen langen Schlaf zu tun." It is an "Erlösungs-drama" if he retires in the full knowledge of the fact that the end is at hand, and is reconciled to the fact that it should be so. Goepfert summarizes Paul Ernst's ideas as follows:

Die ganze Grösze der tragischen Welt ist geblieben, nicht eine Umkehr, nicht eine Busze führte diese selbstherrlichen Menschen zur Erlösung; eine göttliche Schau, eine Gnade--etwas dem logischen Verstande Unfaszbares wurde ihnen zuteil. 'Gott wurde Mensch, die Menschen werden Gott'--d. h. die scharfe Trennung zwischen Diesseits und Jenseits ist eine Täuschung, das Jenseits reicht tief in das Diesseits hinein; die Anklage gegen das unbegreifliche Schicksal ist zu einem Hymnus auf die unbegreifliche Gnade Gottes geworden. ¹²

"Schicksalsdramen" and "Erlösungs-dramen" may differ widely in their philosophic content: they do not differ at all in their dramatic structure. Paul Ernst's demands in regard to dramatic form hold for the one as for the other. Chief among them is his emphasis upon necessity. In all other kinds of literary composition, according to him, the author enjoys much liberty of action. He may mold his plot this way or that to suit his fancy or his intentions, though, of course, there are differences and gradations of style and purpose. The short story, he says, requires much more preciseness and planning than the longer novel. But in the drama, the poet

¹¹Op. cit., p. 44.

¹²H. G. Goepfert, Erlbenis und Gestaltung des Tragischen im Drama Paul Ernsts, pp. 76-77.

must be sure that the architecture of his work is flawless. Here a single slip in the weaving of the plot, a single unnecessary addition, a single "non sequitur" might prove fatal.

Das Drama ist Weltanschauungsdichtung,
der Kampf des Menschen mit dem Schicksal ist
der grösste Vorwurf, den es für den Künstler
überhaupt geben kann.¹³

Das Drama ist die höchste Dichtungsform, weil
es die strengste ist.¹⁴

Because their architectural construction
failed to satisfy him, Paul Ernst even says:

Noch unsere klassischen Dichter, noch
Hebbel wussten nicht, was die Tragödie ist.¹⁵

The term "necessity," as here used, covers a much more specific demand than merely that of purposeful construction. By it Paul Ernst requires that every tragedy depict its hero as facing an absolutely inevitable decision which in itself is destined to destroy him, no matter how he chooses to act.

From this point of view Wallenstein, for instance, is really not a tragedy. The hero might possibly have chosen to retire to a life of comfortable idleness instead of taking a chance on the fortunes of war. To be sure, Wallenstein's character was such that it did not permit such a choice. But therein lies the very point which Paul Ernst emphasizes, for he demands that external forces, not psychological motivations, be the deciding factors in the great crises. The hero must be confronted with an inevitable choice between two necessities, either one of which will destroy him.

¹³W.z.F., p. 54.

¹⁴Grundlagen, p. 596.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 52.

It is precisely because he failed in this regard, that Paul Ernst singled out Hebbel in the above quotation. Like Ibsen, Hebbel traces motives masterfully, but motives are never inevitable. Every decision of psychologically motivated heroes "ist im letzten Grunde willkürlich."¹⁶

If Ernst insists upon "necessity" as the most important single demand of every true tragic drama, his insistence upon "simplicity" is of well nigh equal importance. Not only does he exclude all unnecessary additions to the main plot, he prescribes also that the principal action itself be reduced to such simple and direct lines that nothing remains but a bare outline of those events and conversations which lead to catastrophe.

The two main elements of entertainment, comedy and spectacle, are thus entirely banned from the tragic stage. Comic interludes are definitely a desecration, and spectacular scenes are a distracting interference. Even pleasant embellishments are out of place.

Mit dem Detail kann man keine grosse Bewegung darstellen, denn die Grösze wird erst sichtbar durch die Abstraktion vom Detail.¹⁷

In a very illuminating illustration of just what he means by such an expression Ernst compares the drama to a statue and lyric poetry or narration to a painting. Distinguishing sharply between the two groups, he then says that the latter must have backgrounds and that the former cannot have them. A tragedy must stand alone like a piece of sculpture. The tragic hero, we are left to conclude, should ideally stand on the stage just as unadorned, just as unembellished, just as unsupported, as a lone figure chiseled from marble.¹⁸

¹⁶W.z.F., p. 115

¹⁷Credo (Erstausgabe), p. 228.

¹⁸Cf. Ibid., p. 143.

Such simplicity calls for unusual powers of presentation. "In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister," says Goethe. Paul Ernst may not have this mastery. Certain it is that he has done his utmost to attain it. His Brunhild has seven "dramatis personae." It is played within a single courtyard; and it consumes only the time between sunrise and the following sunset.

The third fundamental demand which Paul Ernst makes of good tragedy might be compressed into the one word, "power" or "elevation." The French call it "high" tragedy. It consists in the restriction that the chief "dramatis personae" be members of royalty or people of comparable positions in life, for only they are sufficiently free. It is the very essence of drama that its heroes should be free, "unbedingt und frei."¹⁹ Middle-class people can never hope to qualify on this score, because laws and customs and habitual considerations of others circumscribe their liberties of action. Moreover, if a middle-class individual, not to mention a member of the proletariat, should by any chance be master of his own fate, that fate could still not be truly tragic, because it lacks dimensions. With freedom must come responsibility. Irresponsible freedom is inherently uninteresting.

Erst am Lose und Leiden der Könige kann
die tragische Bedeutung der Welt ganz und
voll zur Erkenntnis gebracht werden.²⁰

For:

Im Könige schlägt die höchste menschliche
Freiheit (immunity from law) zur höchsten

¹⁹Ibid., p. 144.

²⁰"Das tragische Königsideal" posthumously edited in Die Neue Literatur for February, 1935, vol. 36, no. 2.

menschlichen Unfreiheit (immensity of possible consequences) um: das ist die Tragik.²¹

Only one final further step in intensification of this basic theory is possible. "Nur ein Gott könnte noch tragischer wirken."²² But, of course, no poet could put a god upon the stage and make him look convincing. Hence, the theoretical ideal is impracticable. But it is by the closeness of their approach to it that poets should be measured. In fact, Paul Ernst does not hesitate to lay down the rule: "Je bedeutender er (i.e., der Dichter) ist, desto unwirklicher sind seine Personen!"²³ Even kings must, therefore, be dissociated as much as possible from all historical and other realities and become pure types of their kind rather than merely typical representatives. For that reason, Paul Ernst thinks, poets would be well advised if they would invent their royal characters outright, instead of taking them from prototypes found in the records of history. Trivial details, then, would not be so likely to detract from the massive proportions of the ideal human beings presented on the stage.

These are the essentials of Paul Ernst's theory of tragedy. One might summarize them by defining the Paul Ernstian tragedy as an action in which the greatest of men wrestle with the most profound of problems in a situation permitting none but a fatal issue, and with full attention centered exclusively upon the task in hand.

That definition would seem at first glance to fit Schiller's dramas as well as Paul Ernst's, but there is one important distinction. It would not include the color and pageantry which Schiller loved to display, the operatic character of the Schillerian drama. In that respect a great gulf will forever

²¹Loc. cit.

²²Loc. cit.

²³Loc. cit.

remain fixed between Paul Ernst's dramas and Schiller's. Schiller wrote primarily for the stage. He had day-to-day contact with actors and the theatre. Paul Ernst wrote for the reader; at least, it must still be demonstrated that his dramas can be played successfully on the stage. Perhaps they are much too heavy in their thought-content and make too few concessions to the theatre-goer, who wants to be entertained as well as thrilled and elevated.

But, except for this possible deficiency in stage-ability and eye-appeal, the Paul Ernstian dramas are similar indeed to Schiller's. They have a like purpose, namely to stir the soul and to lift the individual to his highest potentialities.

Such a very general statement would seem trite, of course, and be of no particular value in the comparison of two poets if it were not for the fact that the century which intervenes between them had moved very far away, indeed, from this general purpose common both to Schiller and Paul Ernst. As it is, the contrast between Paul Ernst and his realistic contemporaries, for that matter, the distinct contrast between the mature Paul Ernst and his youthful self, is "ipso facto," analogous to a return to Schiller.

3. Guilt and Atonement.

Koch and, before him, Göpfert have recognized this similarity between Paul Ernst and Schiller. Koch, on one occasion,²⁴ refers to Schiller as "der Paul Ernst verwandteste Dichter," and Göpfert says of Paul Ernst:

Die zunehmende Betonung des Ethischen, der Idee führt ihn immer mehr zum "Erhabenen" hin. Seine letzte Tragödie "Brunhild," die eigentlich schon über die Tragödie hinausweist, erinnert in ihrem Verklärungsausgang

²⁴Karl-Heinz Koch, Paul Ernst und das tragische Königsideal, p. 35.

stark an Schiller. Und auch schon in der frühen Erkenntnis, dass die Notwendigkeit die gemeinsame Wurzel des Aesthetischen und Sittlichen sei, ist die Verwandtschaft zu spüren. Es ist die Forderung der sittlichen Grösze, die ihm noch heute Schiller eine Heimat sein lässt.²⁵

In this statement we welcome particularly the selection of Paul Ernst's last tragedy as reminiscent of Schiller. Göpfert's words indicate that Paul Ernst returned more and more to Schiller's ideas and conceptions as he progressed. Paul Ernst's "Erlösungs-dramen," which followed upon his tragedies, also reveal an essential similarity to the Schillerian drama.

Göpfert has argued, we think successfully, that Paul Ernst developed a type of absolute tragedy, whereas Schiller had achieved only relative tragedy, and that Paul Ernst has come to view necessity not only as an ethical, but as a metaphysical concept. But Paul Ernst did not remain satisfied with tragedy! The period during which he produced his tragedies was only one period among several. If his life were to be divided into three main periods, then the middle period during which he produced his tragedies would be surrounded by periods which might, by contrast, be called non-tragic, during which he believed in a purposeful world and in a divinely appointed destiny for man in this world. We have, advisedly, not used the term "moral world order," lest that expression again suggest a connection between goodness and reward, evil and punishment, which Paul Ernst rejected so violently. But the terms "purposeful world" and "divinely appointed destiny" are quite sufficient to differentiate the Paul Ernst who wrote the "Erlösungs-dramen" from the Paul Ernst who had, earlier, written tragedies.

²⁵H.G. Göpfert, Erlebnis und Gestaltung des Tragischen im Drama Paul Ernsts, p. 121.

We are prepared to go a step farther than Göpfert and to say that these "Erlösungsdramen" are essentially quite like those dramas of Schiller in which a guilt-and-atonement problem has been found, except that Paul Ernst, regarding guilt as inevitable and according to the will of God, has substituted an insight into God's plans for atonement. Paul Ernst's heroes, as well as Schiller's, are possessed with a sense of guilt and both act in such a manner as to be relieved of the sense of guilt. Schiller's truly tragic characters are morally guilty. Paul Ernst's characters are, in fact, innocent, though they believe themselves to be guilty. Schiller's characters obtain relief by indicating a willingness to suffer the consequences of their evil deeds, of their guilt. Paul Ernst's characters become free by winning their way through to a philosophy that neutralizes guilt by defining it as the result, not of man's failure, but of God's planning.

Small indeed as the differences between Paul Ernst and Schiller may appear from these observations, they are, in fact, still smaller. This becomes apparent when it is recalled that it is, at least, debatable whether Schiller consistently taught the necessity of atonement for guilt in his dramas. This writer has never been able to satisfy himself that Wallenstein shows signs of repentance anywhere. At the very last he still says:

Hätt ich vorher gewusst, was nun geschehn,
Dasz es den liebsten Freund mir würdenkosten,
Und hätte mir das Herz, wie jetzt, gesprochen--
Kann sein, ich hätte mich bedacht--kann sein,
Auch nicht.

Is that the language of a man who is sorry for his sins? It seems rather to betray a man who has come to recognize himself as destined to go his appointed way. His earlier excuse for not following well-

intended advice to avoid danger, "Mich schuf aus gröberm Stoffe die Natur," seems, moreover, to contain exactly the idea which Paul Ernst stresses so much, e.g., when Apollo says to Cassandra:

Du folgtest deinem ungestümen Geist
Und tatest Unrecht, das der Gott gewollt,

the idea, namely, that all our actions, evil as well as good, are predestined by an a-moral fate.

4. Freedom and Necessity.

The parallels between Paul Ernst and Schiller so far discussed seem to us to be of surpassing importance. They concern matters which both poets regarded as essential--witness Paul Ernst's constant emphasis on predestination and Schiller's worry, expressed after years of effort to overcome the difficulty involved: "Das eigentliche Schicksal tut noch zu wenig, und der eigne Fehler des Helden (i.e., Wallenstein's) noch zu viel zu seinem Unglück." ²⁶

A final comparison, however, concerns the very heart of the life work of both these poets. Schiller's one cry had been for freedom. Paul Ernst's whole thinking is centered on necessity. If both these terms should be found to describe two aspects of one and the same thing, Paul Ernst's dramatic work would be very similar to Schiller's indeed.

At least one fellow investigator seems to have sensed this possibility with us. H. O. Burger quotes this sentence from an essay written by Paul Ernst in 1890: "Wir haben eingesehen, dasz wir alle unentrinnbaren, ehernen Gesetzen unterworfen sind,"²⁷ and comments, after some explanations:

²⁶In a letter to Goethe, dated November 28, 1798.

²⁷Heinz Otto Burger, "Der Weg Paul Ernst's im Drama," Germanisch-Romanische Monatsschrift, xxv, no. 5-6 (Mai-Juni 1937), p. 198.

Und doch schlieszt ein Satz wie der zitierte keimhaft schon den ganzen Paul Ernst in sich. Bei allem Wandel ist er stets derselbe geblieben. Ihn beherrscht ein ungewöhnlich starkes Gefühl von der Notwendigkeit, der zwingenden, all unseren Eigenwillen vernichtenden Macht des Schicksals. Etwas anderes in ihm aber begehrt dagegen auf, ein nicht minder starker Wille zur Freiheit. 1890 glaubt er sie in der Erkenntnis zu erlangen, das verrät: auch für ihn ist, gleich wie es Humboldt von Schiller sagt, das eigentliche Element des Lebens der Gedanke.

It is not only this last sentence which we would underscore, for Paul Ernst is a "Gedanken-dichter," as Schiller had been before him, but more particularly the recognition that Ernst's thoughts revolved all his life, about precisely the same problem as the one that absorbed so much of Schiller's thinking. Burger particularly has sensed and stated this fact. Necessity and freedom are not two separate problems but one single problem. Paul Ernst and Schiller may have emphasized different aspects of it, but the same, single problem it was which has occupied both men.

Paul Ernst speaks incessantly about necessity. As a bewildered young man he used that term to describe the effects of heredity and milieu upon man in truly naturalistic fashion. As an older man of serenity and wisdom he uses the term with reference to the recognition that a higher will than man's controls his actions and his purposes. Necessity is then practically synonymus with will of God. It controls not only our general destiny, but our every action, even our thoughts. Man becomes a mere tool, willing or otherwise, of powers over which he has not the slightest control.

²⁸ Loc. cit.

If this belief of Paul Ernst's in necessity be contrasted with Schiller's exclamation:

Der Mensch ist frei geschaffen, ist frei--
Und wär er in Ketten geboren,

the two poets would seem to be poles apart and committed to hopelessly irreconcilable views. But the contrast vanishes perceptibly and begins to blend into similarity as soon as it is remembered that Schiller's lines thus quoted refer to a relative freedom only, and not to absolute freedom. In them, the young Schiller protests against political servitude, against the domination of one individual by another. They represent exactly the same reaction which prompted Paul Ernst to become enthusiastic over the Socialist program of the late eighties of the past century. Metaphysically, freedom is quite a different thing.

With this metaphysical concept of freedom Schiller deals, for example, in his poem, "Das Ideal und das Leben." And he denies it, as predicated of man! As long as body and soul are united, at least, there is no such thing as freedom for man.

Wollt ihr schon auf Erden Göttern gleichen,
Frei sein in des Todes Reichen,
Brecht nicht von seines Gartens Frucht!
... ..
Aber flüchet aus der Sinne Schranken
In die Freiheit der Gedanken,
Und die Furchterscheinung ist entflohn.
... ..
Bis der Gott, des Irdischen entkleidet,
Flammend sich vom Menschen scheidet
Und des Aethers leichte Lüfte trinkt.
Froh des neuen ungewohnten Schwebens,
Flieszt er rückwärts und des Erdenlebens
Schweres Traumbild sinkt und sinkt und sinkt.

Whatever else Schiller may have said about freedom, such lines as these prove that he regarded it as

desirable but as impossible of achievement. A fiction must take the place of reality. In reality, the human will is frustrated on every turn.

And just as it can thus be shown that Schiller, for all his glorification of human political liberty, shared with Paul Ernst the basic recognition that man is not free, it can also be shown that the two men agree in their solution of the fundamental problem thus posed: if man is not free, how shall he save his dignity?

Paul Ernst's tragedies still answer this question by having their heroes breathe defiance and self-assertion. Brunhild is disgusted with the prospects of having to live among common mortals and seeks death as preferable to such a fate. But his "Erlösungsdramen" offer an entirely different way out. In them the hero is reconciled to his fate.

Dionysos: In jenen letzten hellen Augenblicken,
Da sich die Seele von dem Körper trennt,
Schaut Theseus seines Handelns unbewusste
Und seines Seins notwendige Bedeutung.

... ..

Theseus: Und es ist recht, dasz ich nun
sterben musz.

... ..

Und meine Seele flieht aus diesem Körper,
Und musz nun suchen, suchen lange Jahre.
Wohl war sie gut, doch noch nicht gut genug.

... ..

Dionysos: Gut ist das Leben und der Tod ist gut,
Schön ist das Licht, und schön die Finsternis,
Gut ist das Leiden und die Freude gut,
Gott wurde Mensch, die Menschen werden Gott,
Dem Sonnenglanze öffnet eure Augen:
Ihr seid erlöst, wenn ihr die Augen öffnet.²⁹

²⁹ Dramen III, pp. 399-400.

Schiller's heroes do not die either defiantly or devoutly. Somehow, they manage to follow a middle course, without making such exact confessions of their faith as Paul Ernst's heroes without exception make. But Schiller has taught that same defiance and that same submission. Defiance speaks from the consideration:

Fälle können eintreten, wo ... es kein
anderes Mittel gibt, ... der Macht der Natur
zu widerstehen, als ihr zuvorzukommen und
durch eine freie Aufhebung des sinnlichen
Interesse, ehe noch eine physische Macht es
tut, sich moralisch zu entleiben.³⁰

Submission is the essence of the advice, contained in "Das Ideal und das Leben":

Nehmt die Gottheit auf in euren Willen,
Und sie steigt von ihrem Weltenthron.

The lines immediately following at least would seem to leave room for no other interpretation. They say:

Des Gesetzes strenge Fessel bindet
Nur den Sklavensinn, der es verschmäht;
Mit des Menschen Widerstand verschwindet
Auch des Gottes Majestät.

Bellermann seems to have excellent reasons for saying:

In der willigen Befolgung der Forderungen
der Natur und in der selbstständigen Regelung
seiner Beziehungen zur Welt und zu seinen
Mitmenschen gewinnt und genießt der Mensch

³⁰From "Ueber das Erhabene," ed. by Bellermann, vol. vii, p. 247.

das höchste Glück, das ihm vorbehalten ist:
die Freiheit. Damit haben wir den Lebensnerv
von Schillers Denken berührt." ³¹

The sum total of Paul Ernst's advice to his
fellowmen could not be better summarized than in this
same phrase: "Willige Befolgung der Forderungen
der Natur."

³¹Introduction to vol. vii, p. 7.

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

This study of the relationship of Paul Ernst to Schiller proceeds from an analysis of an essay on Don Carlos which was written during the winter of 1916-17. In this essay Ernst severely criticizes Schiller's dramatic form and his ethics. If one were to read nothing else that Paul Ernst has written about Schiller, it might be concluded that his attitude toward Schiller was much the same as, for instance, that of Otto Ludwig. For his criticism seems unappreciative and unnecessarily severe.

We have found, however, (1) that this essay could not be so directly and so simply interpreted, without doing violence to several fundamental principles in hermeneutics. A due regard to special circumstances prevailing at the time (e.g., the possible defeat of the German armies in the World War) and special motives which prompted the composition of the essay (namely, the desire to find a long-range explanation for this defeat), have caused us to regard the more extreme conclusions as possibly not fully intended. We were strengthened in this conviction by the recognition that Paul Ernst was throughout his life a constant admirer of Schiller and by the knowledge that he wrote a small volume on Schiller for the German masses at nearly the same time, from which such criticisms were omitted.

(2) We have found that, as a child and a young man, Paul Ernst was unqualifiedly enthusiastic about Schiller's works, learning probably more from them than from any other single source. During his years in Berlin, however, he became critical of all his former beliefs and loyalties, including his

attachment to Schiller as his favorite poet. Nevertheless, he continued to regard Schiller as one of the greatest of human beings and never wavered in this judgment though he later criticized his dramas severely.

(3) The criticism of Schiller's ethics we have found to be essentially a criticism of the Kantian Categorical Imperative and of the connection which Kant makes between goodness and reward on the one hand and between evil and punishment on the other. Paul Ernst regards Kant's ethics as essentially middleclass and, therefore, inadequate; he also considers it psychologically unsound. Paul Ernst's error seemed to us to consist in too unwarranted an identification of the ethics in Schiller's dramas with those of the Kantian system. We quoted an outspoken passage from the essay Ueber das Erhabene to show that Schiller would scarcely have pleaded guilty to Paul Ernst's accusations. Beyond that we revealed unexplained and glaring inconsistencies in his judgments of Schiller's works, particularly with reference to the presence or absence of a strong element of necessity in Wallenstein.

(4) A comparison of Paul Ernst's essay with more recent contributions to Schiller research reveals Herald Jensen, Werner Deubel and Hermann Gumbel as in substantial agreement with him regarding Schiller's dependence upon Kant. Cysarz is found in disagreement, this critic regarding Ernst's, Jensen's, Deubel's, and Gumbel's whole orientation as wrong. Kathleen Cunningham and Hermann Schneider support the general charge of Schiller's lack of independence in the matter of literary form, though Schneider, disagreeing with Ernst in this respect, believes that Schiller was making progress toward perfection in form when death overtook him. The posthumous essay of Dilthey disagrees with most of Paul Ernst's criticisms, defending rather such views as Ernst himself

had expressed in 1912, i.e., four or five years before he wrote the essay on Don Carlos.

(5) Paul Ernst's earlier views regarding Schiller seem to us, moreover, to be much more in keeping with his own esthetics than the criticisms which he voiced later. In fact, we find, a surprising similarity between his conception of drama and high tragedy and that of Schiller a century earlier. He agrees with Schiller that high tragedy should be "Gedankendrama" and essentially "Weltanschauungsdichtung," presenting an exceptional human being "in des Lebens Drang." With the classicist Schiller, too, he regards form as of utmost importance, and he shares with him a common abhorrence for the style which has come to be known as naturalistic.

(6) The one essential difference between Paul Ernst's dramatic works and those of Schiller, we find, consists of his own Spartan simplicity of style and his utter economy of means. Schiller has written expressly for the stage, and his plays have always had a strong appeal to large masses of people. Paul Ernst's dramas seem to be intended more particularly either for the reader only or for performance before small and select audiences at most.

All in all, it is our opinion that Paul Ernst bears a striking resemblance to Schiller, both as a man and as a dramatist, and that this resemblance may very well be much greater than the younger of the two men ever realized himself. If Hohenstein's interpretation of the later views of Schiller be considered correct, it may in fact be possible to add, with respect to metaphysics, that Paul Ernst continued where Schiller had left off.

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